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THE ASIANADIAN

AN ASIAN CANADIAN MAGAZINE



Sexuality

Asianadian Aims:

- 1) To find new dignity and pride in being Asian in Canada.
- 2) To promote an understanding between Asian Canadians and other Canadians.
- 3) To speak out against those conditions, individuals and institutions perpetuating racism in Canada.
- 4) To stand up against the distortions of our history in Canada, stereotypes, economic exploitations, and the general tendency towards injustice and inequality practised on minority groups.
- 5) To provide a forum for Asian Canadian writers, artists, musicians, etc.
- 6) To promote unity by bridging the gap between Asians with roots in Canada and recent immigrants.

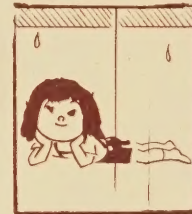
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Editorial

A Canada without Quebec is a Canada without the Liberal Party



May 22, 1979 was a watershed not only for the Conservatives, but also for the Liberal Party. French Canada remained consistent in its support for Pierre Trudeau and his party. But the spectre of Liberal oblivion looms closer with Rene Levesque's constitutional confrontation in the spring. No party in Canada can rely solely on provincial ethnicity to carry its weight in any election. Without Quebec, the challenge of the Liberal Party will not come from the right.

National Unity -- was it treasonous for Canadians to avoid it? National unity became the catch-phrase for the Liberal Party's viability and longevity. It was not an issue of inflation, unemployment, or the energy crisis for Pierre Trudeau, but the constant lurking reality of a leader without a party.

The challenge of Quebecois regionalism, wrung out of decades in exile in a Canada feeding on Anglo power, showed its strength with Liberal excursions into multiculturalism. Blending of races into $\frac{1}{4}$ Native, $\frac{1}{4}$ Asian, $\frac{1}{4}$ Black, and $\frac{1}{4}$ European making the true Canada -- was this the intention?

Was 'National unity' a clever device to divert the true intentions of the Liberal Party, or the sign board of our future? Were the Canadian people deceived by talk of mortgage deductibility? Or were they simply convinced that a leader strung out by a neglected wife and haunted by followers of suspect talent in an iron cage had to go?

National unity was never the issue for Canadians. Its evasive sense was lost in the rush to see the light at the end of the dwindling wallet. Hard cash and its potential loss galvanized a switch to a less daring time. After 11 years, the length of the Liberal cloth became threadbare. Canadians voted to cast a stone in the sea in hopes of finding a pearl in return.

National unity was simply the fixation of a leader looking out for the good of his party. If Quebec never looks over its shoulder again to see if the tide has turned, all the Liberal seats will find safety only in museums. The centre will split into right and left. Business versus labour. Dialectical politics in a Canadian hue will pull at our votes. Unless the NDP can stop bickering about wounded pride, the Conservatives could rule well into the 21st century. Canada without Quebec is a Canada without the Liberal Party.

One day when our children cannot distinguish between Beatlemania and Trudeaumania, the axe will have fallen across the gravestone of a Canada splintered into many parts. But the Canada of today is just that -- splinters of Asians, Blacks, Europeans, Americans and others who see our country as a new beginning.

The forced expulsion of Vietnamese from a country dulled by centuries of war is a tragedy of such proportion that it does not augur well for peace in Asia. But people whose history has been death and destruction can only function in a way that history has taught. It is a time of perpetual movement that will sting the complacency of Canadians. We are a country of a large

area and a small population. We are the last of the world's frontier. The argument that Asians cannot live in so cold a climate is the thinking of a Sophist. History has shown that Asians from the heat of China, the jungles of South Asia, and the hinterlands of Japan, have survived the cold of winter, prospered in a climate of ill-will, and contributed to Canadian life in countless ways.

Strength lies not in one or two cultures, but in the many. And it is the many who will speak from the consciousness of their own experience. Asianadians will speak out in even greater tidal waves about our past, present--and future in this country. With the current issue, focusing on sexuality, we are starting Volume II of *The Asianadian*. Sexuality has for too long been a subject 'not talked about' openly. In this issue, we are beginning to open up the necessary discussion by examining such topics as sexual stereotyping of Asianadians and Asians, the phenomenon of interracial couples involving Japanese Canadians, the experience of being Asianadian and gay in a heterosexual, racist society -- plus an interview with one of Canada's best poets: Joy Kogawa, a writer who has managed to capture the intricate and often painful depths of male-female relationships. And in addition to our regular departments, we are offering a thought-provoking analysis of *The Deer Hunter*, this decade's most popular anti-woman, anti-human film celebrating American fascism and machismo.

During the following year we will continue to make the Asianadian voice heard as we explore such topics as Asianadian children, Asians in Quebec and Asian political movements in Canada. The spark that ignited over a year ago has been fueled by the generosity of our backers, the warmth of our friendships and the inspiration of our subscribers, writers and artists. What began as an exercise in righting wrongs has evolved into devotion to tackle issues and questions that concern us as Asianadians. No longer do we see a split personality, a person on the margin of existence -- a Canadian with an Asian face. The first test has been passed. We have taken what was lifeless and inert and fashioned it into a unity of purpose. We have brought people with cultural roots in all of Asia to work, to speak out, and to form a bond of affection. And it is only in this pursuit of the printed word that multiculturalism works.

We have looked deeply into our hearts and minds. The ravages of our histories in Canada brought torment to our psyche. It brought out the rage and defiance so well known to followers of iconoclast movements. The lost moments in a past that shamed us into denying our future as Asians in Canada provided the strength of a spark that lit the prairie fire.

Where there was once lead is now gold.

- Tony Chan

THE DEER HUNTER: THE GREAT AMERICAN LIE!

By Chasha Arial Khan



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In the years following the American withdrawal from South Vietnam and its subsequent liberation by the people of South Vietnam, a spectre has been haunting America -- the Vietnam War. It seems that Hollywood, the bastion of the American movie industry, a cultural by-product of a decadent civilization in collusion with the right wing, has entered into a holy alliance to exorcize this spectre. Michael Cimino, a representative of the latter in his latest movie, *The Deer Hunter*, has given a new interpretation of the war in Vietnam. Apparently, it has succeeded in convincing the North American movie goers that after all the American boys had carried out their holy mission on behalf of God and the country in a distant area of darkness. This is the central message of *The Deer Hunter*.

That itself is not serious, but what is serious is that from beginning to end the picture is replete with lies which one finds morally disturbing and historical-

ly distorted. *The Deer Hunter* has also captured the attention of the North American news media, particularly two newsmagazines: *Newsweek* and *Time*. According to these magazines, the truth of the Vietnam War has suddenly come out into the light like Plato's cave man who suddenly enjoyed the sunshine for the first time in his life. Perhaps Cimino also had this in his mind. But history is history; it is not a fiction. It does not grow out of someone's mind, neither does it drop from heaven. Rather, it is a human experience which occurs in certain periods of time.

Cimino's attempt to sell his accounts of the Vietnam War to North Americans has raised serious questions about his integrity and sense of history. Cimino, who won the Oscar for best director, has directed only one film before: *Thunderbolt and Lightfoot* (1974), with Clint Eastwood and Jeff Bridges. The film lacked any substance, but was a carbon copy of the earlier East-

wood action movies. However, it made an attempt to express a subtle disdain for heterosexuality. Friendship between men was glorified to an extent that turned out to be an apology for homosexuality. *The Deer Hunter*, too, could not escape from the philosophy of *Thunderbolt and Lightfoot*.

The theme of *The Deer Hunter* revolves around five narrow-minded, loud-mouthed, carefree bully-boys who deeply care for one another. Their passion for drinking beer, playing pool and hunting deer supersedes other interests. Naturally, they are indifferent to women as human beings. From beginning to end, the film is packed with macho action and cultural arrogance that is so morally disturbing that it can hardly go by without comment.

SYMBOLISM IN "THE DEER HUNTER"

As mentioned earlier, the popularity of *The Deer Hunter* among North American movie fans is certainly an ideological crisis of the people rather than of Cimino. Any critical social investigation of the success of *The Deer Hunter* has to proceed from the presupposition that an idea can catch the imagination of the people only when the filmmaker's personal point of view of politics corresponds to the ideology of individuals. The origins of such popular support come directly from the existing social and political thought of that epoch. An idea becomes a material force only when it moves away from a metaphysical world to a world of reality with which the average people can identify themselves. In order to evoke an identity, an idea has to be interpreted from a folk point of view. In *The Deer Hunter*, Cimino uses the folk image of the Eastern European immigrants so adroitly that no one has anything to complain about. He sees what he wants to see. Such is the power of the movie. Cimino achieves this miracle by using two symbols: mysticism and national narcissism; that is, the greatness of the nation.

The flora and fauna of America are praised and honoured in a ritualistic way -- the view of the majestic snow-capped mountains, verdures, fast-flowing rivers with clean waters, and boundless space. This is the perfect world in which one may find a utopia -- the great American dream. A vision of a new world, a linear world beyond the reach of history. For the Americans, everything under the sun is possible. For them, history ceases to exist. They believe in the future the way a magician believes in his magic. Vietnam, on the other hand, is depicted as an area of darkness. Everything looks gloomy there. Its rivers are muddy and treacherous. Its verdure looks vicious. Its cities are overcrowded. Moreover, the people of Vietnam can't speak the English language, the accepted language of "civilized" people. We hardly ever see Vietnam or Saigon in the sunlight, as if the sun never rises in the Orient -- the mysterious Orient, beyond the imagination of the white people. Implicitly, Cimino has accepted the concept of manichaeism which holds a dualistic conception of creation: good and bad, white and black, light and darkness. By so doing, he evokes in the popular mind a powerful Eurocentric moral stimulus and sanction for the white people's superiority.

America as a nation feels special responsibility towards the people of the so-called free world -- what Americans call manifest destiny. This manifest destiny

or social Darwinism is the psychological basis of national narcissism. This national narcissism is clearly manifested through Michael, the hero of the film. He lives apart from all social evil, a disciplined person. Success can be achieved only through will power and discipline. Michael, therefore, stands out as a model of success-- what Nick calls a "control freak". During the torture session in the prison camp, we are not surprised at Michael's indomitable courage. He encourages his friends to develop will power to overcome the ordeal that has befallen them. These powerfully violent torture sequences are edited so methodically that the audience develops an immediate hatred for the people of Vietnam. Michael finally succeeds in gunning down the Vietnamese and rescues his buddies from the "heart of darkness".

Another point: Cimino's over enthusiasm for snow-capped mountains, rocks, glaciers and dramatic cloud formations at once recalls the sequences of pre-Hitler movies in Germany. As Peter Biskind in *Seven Days* (Mar. 30, 1979) reminds us, all these symbols are the manifestations of contempt for ordinary people. Those who do climbs are not very ordinary people, rather they are men of guts. This nascent fascist ideology, as observed by famous German film critic Alfred Kracauer, was first articulated in the notorious Nazi documentary *Triumph of the Will*. In this film we see Hitler's airplane, surrounded by clusters of clouds, symbolizing the convergence of a cosmic world and the Hitler cult. One of the scenes of *The Deer Hunter* is particularly reminiscent of *Triumph of Will*. Michael, in search of prey, climbs to the top of the virgin mountain and is greeted by a heavenly choir in the sky, singing a Russian orthodox chant while rain clouds whirl about him. This is an image of a divine being beyond the reach of ordinary folks. It seems a holy spirit has descended from the heavens to baptize the reason of the mortal beings, the way Hitler did to the German nation.

Pauline Kael in *The New Yorker* (Dec. 18, 1978) has drawn to our attention another important point which cannot be ignored. After returning from the first deer hunt we see Michael and his buddies drinking beer while big, bearded Axel (Chuck Aspegren) entertains them with a Chopin nocturne. The music touches profoundly. Indeed, it is an emotional scene just before the departure for Vietnam. The music demonstrates their "sensitivity" and human emotion. At the same time it shows

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us that "beer sloshers, savage beasts are soothed by music... it's all too much like those scenes in which roomfuls of Hitler's lieutenants all swooned to Wagner".

THE MASS PSYCHOLOGY OF "THE DEER HUNTER"

To be critical of a situation one has to get to the root of things; if one successfully appreciates their contradictory operations, then the overcoming of mystification is assured.

Cimino has given an indication at the beginning of what kind of movie we can expect of him. The first shot is of a fast moving truck racing towards a small mill town, Clairton, Pennsylvania. There in the steel mill we see three men standing on the floor of the blast furnace, at the end of the shift. It is their last day on the job before they leave for Vietnam for active duty.

It seems Cimino admires the working people of the United States, but these toiling masses don't come from the unskilled professions. Rather they are highly skilled professionals, a sort of labour aristocracy. So, they have enough time to fool around; they are the fun-loving, aggressive Americans. Here lies the mass psychology of *The Deer Hunter*. It touches the lower depth of the society where four-letter words and adventurism form the ethos of life. A world for machos-- a, perfect world for breeding fascism. Beneath their intimate relationships their responsibility to God and the country cannot be passed unnoticed. At a farewell party for Nick, Michael and Steven, arranged by the Clairton chapter of the American Legion, one banner is prominently displayed on the occasion: serving God and the country proudly. Cimino assures us that the town folks are not atheists. They are good Christians. Moreover, they are loyal to their country. A Nazi edict relating to the education of youth and printed in 1933 at Hamburg (one almost has the feeling that Michael Cimino has read the edict thoroughly) conveys the same message:

The teaching of youth to appreciate the value of the State and of the community, derives its strongest inner power from the truths of Christianity... Loyalty and responsibility toward... fatherland (are) most deeply anchored in Christian faith.

Why these glorifications of God and the country? What are the sources of these mystifications? Wilhelm Reich reminds us "every form of mysticism is reactionary, and the reactionary man is mystical". Our experience in the past gives credence to the notion that mysticism always created euphoria among the people which can move them towards reactionary politics. Hitler once used this reactionary ideology to mobilize the German people. Like Hitler, Cimino perfectly realizes that loyalty to one's country is synonymous with loyalty to God. However, the psychology of *The Deer Hunter* differs from that of National Socialism in that the former has a large number of labour aristocrats and a prosperous middle class while the latter had a pauperized middle class and a demoralized working class.

So, the popularity of *The Deer Hunter* among North American movie fans should not surprise us. At the same time the success of *The Deer Hunter* in reaping box office profits, as well as five Oscars cannot be explained solely by Cimino's reactionary views or up-

bringing. These are less important to us. What is important is that a broad section of the people is willing to accept his ideas, his interpretation of the war in Vietnam. The latent ideology of the reactionaries is simply utilized by Cimino in capturing a fortune and five Oscars.

THE METAPHOR OF RUSSIAN ROULETTE

The culture of the Vietnamese people is characterized by playing with life (ironically this is an American game). The game that is popular among them is Russian roulette. Cimino and his collaborator, Deric Washburn, are not sure where this idea comes from. Even Tweedledee and Tweedledum (*Newsweek* and *Time*), which were once vociferous about the American interference in Vietnam and believed in the domino theory as an article of faith, couldn't provide any clues about this game in relation to American soldiers in Vietnam. One may well wonder why this game is introduced at all.



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One answer may be found in the American way of life where guns and violence have become common features of American culture. The success of any movie in the North American context hinges upon how violent and horrifying a film it is. Therefore Cimino has not basically violated the American norms and values. Yet the metaphor of Russian roulette carries a deeper message in that the people of Vietnam are portrayed as savages -- gooks. For them life has no meaning. As General Westmoreland once said, "in Asia life was cheap".

Even the rules of the game are different in the two Vietnams. In North Vietnam it is a compulsory game played under communism; in South Vietnam the people play it voluntarily under the free enterprise system. Despite these supposed differences, the two Vietnams are essentially the same. They are both representative of the same culture, the same heart of darkness that white people should avoid.

DISTORTIONS OF HISTORY

The Deer Hunter is not just a movie for movie fans. It looks at history from a partisan point of view. Art in the North American context is always considered non-political, yet *The Deer Hunter* reflects the politics of the director. Michael Cimino has tried throughout the movie to impress on us how the innocent Americans are sacrificing themselves at the altar of democracy, but he never makes it clear what the Vietnamese are fighting for.

When the helicopter is hovering over the lush, green hamlet dotted with thatch huts in Vietnam, we see Michael for the first time as a Green Beret in action. Here, in these sequences, we see the American version of the Vietnam War. For example, a Vietcong or a North Vietnamese (we don't know) tosses a hand grenade into a foxhole where women and children have taken shelter. This horrifying scene so outrages Michael that he throws a flamethrower and kills the enemy. Moments later Michael, Nick and Steven become prisoners of the communists. Suddenly on the screen we see a communist soldier putting a gun to the head of a South Vietnamese prisoner. It is a gruesome scene. It vividly recalls to mind the picture taken by an AP photographer in 1968 during the Tet offensive in South Vietnam. An accused guerrilla was shot through the head in an open street by the South Vietnamese national police chief, Brigadier General Nguyen Ngoc Loan. This game, however, was not a monopoly of the South Vietnamese officials. One of the commanders of the Green Berets named Colonel Robert Rheault also murdered a South Vietnamese civilian with an injection of morphine and by pumping two .22 calibre bullets into his head. In a nutshell this is the history of the Russian roulette game. This kind of cold-blooded murder of Vietnamese civilians was not committed only by the above-mentioned officials: American soldiers were also directly involved in carrying out the civilian massacre. In March 1968, several hundred civilians were massacred by American soldiers at My Lai. Later on Lt. William Calley was convicted of murder for his part in the atrocity. Even if we assume that the killing of civilians is something which is unavoidable during a war, it did not happen the way it does in *The Deer Hunter*. Probably Cimino has forgotten that the people of South Vietnam were fighting a guerrilla war in which civilian support was crucial for the outcome of the war. It is useless to comment on which side the civilians were. One final point is that the tiger cage which we see in the film was never used by the North Vietnamese. It was the Thieu regime of South

Vietnam that used it to wipe out the regime's opposition.

SEXUAL POLITICS OF "THE DEER HUNTER"

Since *The Deer Hunter* glorifies celibacy, women are treated marginally. In this way a clear-cut line has been drawn between the male and female worlds. The highest virtue of any male is to keep at an emotional distance from women. With the exception of Stanley (John Cazale), none of the deer hunters is really interested in women. Most of the women in this film are nondescript and remain in the background. Out of these women only one shines like a bright star in the distant horizon, designed to attract our attention: a blue-eyed blonde called Linda (Meryl Streep). It seems that she is the main attraction in Clairton, an American male's dream. She works in a local department store, a seemingly ordinary girl but with a special aura hanging around her. The way she is treated by men (her father and her lovers) points to the sharply defined inferior position of women in the society. As women they are supposed to endure; they are liable to be beaten or molested. It matters little which of the two fates they meet, for in the end they are there to satisfy the ego of the males. In fact, in the minds of the men, women are nothing more than partners in bed to gratify male physical desire.

Even in *The Deer Hunter*, however, the white women are treated more humanely than their counterparts in Vietnam. Back home in America a call girl is gentle and courteous, quite a contrast to the Vietnamese call girl who is depicted as a cruel and greedy hustler. The cabaret girls in Saigon look vulgar and crude; they are presented as somehow less than human. This stereotyped image of the South East Asian woman stems from the same racism that is encouraged and perpetuated by the Anglo-Saxon culture. The image of Vietnamese women with slanted eyes and slanted vaginas perpetuates the feeling that these people are a sub-human species and therefore much easier to kill.

As stated earlier, the story of the Vietnam War as conveyed in *The Deer Hunter*, is a preposterous lie. Nonetheless the picture has been greeted with much fanfare in the United States. This once again shows that the majority of Americans lacks a true sense of history. Whatever socio-historical consciousness was developed at the height of the Vietnam War has, it seems, gone down the drain.



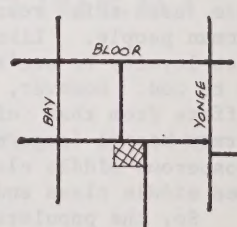
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On the Firing Line



i dig Asian chicks!

By Jasmine Hōsai-Dumlao

Bleach me brown or bleach me blonde
The Japanese Girl demands
Surrounded by caucasian mannequins
Mocking oriental beauty.
She begs the plastic surgeon man
To snip the muscles of her slitty eyes
Lift her nose, plump her breasts --
False eyelashes and latest fashions on
She walks around the Ginza
Not quite who she wants to be
Her thick black hair rusting
Under the peroxide rain

-- Joy Kogawa
A Choice of Dreams

As an Asian woman I have been subjected to a very familiar male come-on that usually begins "I really dig Asian chicks...". This is followed by a string of superlatives, enumerating the various and sundry attributes supposedly held by Asian women in general: they are gentle, unassertive, shy, 'feminine', diminutive, and so on ad nauseum. The insult I feel whenever I hear this line stems, of course, from the categorical stereotyping of all Asian women, including myself, into one preconceived image. These men perceive me not as an individual person but first of all as a member of a particular group, a group about which they have many generalized and often false beliefs. All Asian women are not alike, and when I think about my Asian women friends, none of them fits the so-called image of 'oriental' femininity. Very few of them are any more shy than most people are and none of them is what I would call passive.

So where does this image of the Asian female come from? Perhaps it comes from many parts of Asia where male/female roles are still more strictly delineated, with the woman's place in the home serving tea and tending babies. Perhaps the image is a remnant of the GI's experiences in Asian wars (World War II, the Korean war, and the Vietnam war) where the Asian women they came into contact with were primarily women who had been forced into prostitution in order to survive and the contact had been strictly for sexual purposes.

But a great source of misinformation for the average person has been the Western media with its emphasis on Asian 'exoticness' and 'inscrutability'. For a long time Asian women in movies have been one of two kinds: the coy, submissive 'geisha' doll or the bad-girl Suzie Wong type. Neither of these cardboard characters portrays any of the complexity that any human being, male or female, possesses. Rather, what Hollywood and *Playboy* have done is to perpetuate and ingrain images of Asian women that are totally divorced from reality. Asian female sexuality has been formulated and designed to appeal to male fantasy.

Conversely, Asian women have also been consciously and unconsciously affected by Hollywood's version of North American female sexuality. Many have come to feel inadequate, that they don't measure up to the white standards of beauty and desirability. Small breasts and short legs are defects when measured against superwomen like Raquel Welch. Even in Asia, the standards of beauty have become imbued with concepts of Western beauty. For instance, in Japan many women dye their hair red. And surgery to create double-folded eyelids and to raise the bridge of the nose is extremely popular, a fact not widely publicized in the West. For women who work as hostesses in bars and nightclubs where they provide companionship for men, these physical alterations are often as routine and mandatory as the fashionable clothes they are expected to wear. Both women and men, both Asians and non-Asians have been seduced into believing that these media-created images are indeed a part of reality and that a form of perfection exists which none of us measures up to.

Asian women also tend to feel self-conscious about how other Asian women look. When another Japanese, Chinese or Korean woman gets on the bus or subway, I begin to observe how she appears and how she carries herself. A friend's theory about this phenomenon is that we want to appraise how we ourselves appear in the eyes of others, in particular the majority society. I know that I myself feel a sense of pride in seeing an Asian woman who radiates self-confidence and assurance, someone who knows who she is. On the other hand, I cringe at the sight of an Asian woman who has clearly taken great pains to preen herself into a manufactured package of sexuality. When I see a non-Asian woman who is catering to a sexist image of women, I experience a momentary and admittedly arrogant sense of disgust, yet when I see an Asian woman who has transformed herself into one of these 'oriental dolls' with false eyelashes and twenty layers of eyeliner, my feelings are much more complex: a combination of anger, discomfort and out and out embarrassment. Is it because I see her as representing my group in a way which I perceive as negative? She is a victim of the media and its false images, and at the same time, she is helping to perpetuate them.

tuate those very same myths and stereotypes.

The question of the degree to which these 'ideals' affect us in our outward appearance and demeanor are merely superficial indicators of a much deeper psychological confusion about our identity. The effect of the dominant society upon any subordinate sub-group is a pervasive and insidious one. For centuries women have accepted the male view of what femaleness is or ought to be. Fear of social condemnation has made many become chained to an image created by others, whether that image be one of the exotic Suzie Wong or the quiet and submissive doll, the law-abiding citizen who never rocks the boat. Seeing our sexuality through the eyes of others also means that we become dependent on and seek the approval of others. Thus the cycle becomes self-perpetuating.

While the quest for our own identity must involve an understanding of our history, going back to our 'roots' is not the sole solution. The search begins here and entails fighting against the stereotypes rampant in North American society. We can only discover who we are by separating the myth and the reality in our minds and in the minds of others.

Jasmine Hōsai-Dumlao is a free lance writer in Regina.

sweet n' sassy!

By Johnny Fong

The history of the Chinese in Canada during the nineteenth century is essentially one of men without women. Since most of the labourers who came to this country at that time were contracted as coolie labour they could not afford to bring their wives and children with them. But those men who wanted to stay in Canada brought with them a highly evolved family tradition based on the Confucian primacy of a father and son and husband and wife. An Asian man without a family, whether in Asia or Canada, was a person without substance or foundation. Unfortunately, the early immigrants from China were impeded in their efforts to continue the family tradition in Canada, not only because of their exploitive wages, but also by the Exclusion Act of 1923. As a result, a bachelor society of lonely, disillusioned men sending what money they could spare to vaguely remembered families in China evolved. Thus the tragedy of the early history of the Chinese in Canada was not just the hardship of arduous work with little return, anti-Asian riots and substandard housing--but also the separation from wives and children. Some men were able to send for their families, but these were the favoured few: merchants, diplomats and officials.

When Chinese women were finally allowed entry into Canada it was solely for the purpose of marriage. In traditional Asian marriage, the parents decided the best matches and a relative or friend served as the go-between. Because of parental influence, marriages between couples of different cultures were rare. The fact that the Chinese communities became isolated from the hostile Canadian society also provided a feeling of cohesiveness predicated on self-preservation which made interracial marriages difficult to develop for the Chinese Canadian men.

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After World War II when the Chinese Canadians were finally granted political enfranchisement, cross-cultural communication began to grow as the Chinese Canadians became more exposed to mainstream Canadian life-style. However, even though they were steadily gaining social acceptance into the dominant culture, the Chinese in Canada still faced adverse stereotyping. Although the Chinese had fought on the side of the Allies in World War II, their media image was decidedly negative. They were depicted in American television series as the 'inscrutable' Charlie Chan spouting absurd 'Eastern wisdom' preceded by "Confucious says", or as the sinister Dr. Fu Manchu whose boundless sadism always manifested itself in the raping of virginal, white women. The liberation of China in 1949 by the Mao-Chu Red Army did little to alleviate this stereotype. In fact, Fu Manchu became even more sinister as he was now in collusion with the Communists. And compounding the unflattering portrait of the Chinese male even further was the pidgin-English speaking, ingratiating Hop Sing in the American TV series, *Bonanza*. The asexual, child-like Hop Sing had only one purpose in life-- serving his white masters: the 'masculine', all-American rancher, Ben Cartwright, and his three loyal sons.

Until the late 1960's the Chinese North American male was seen as sexless (or if having any sexuality, a sexuality laced with evil), near-sighted, short, slight and effeminate. He failed to correspond to the accepted North American standard of 'masculinity' exemplified by Robert Redford or Warren Beatty. Asian women on the other hand, were perceived in different, yet equally negative categories, as they were usually presented as sexual play things--cute, little, exotic play things. This image of passive sexuality made Asian women attractive and desirable in the eyes of many white Canadian males, and thus interracial marriages began to emerge. At the same time, the image remained of Chinese men as effete in a Canadian society that recognized virility as the tall, large-boned, hairy, blue-eyed white male. Some Chinese Canadian women, inculcated with the superficial North American standard of masculinity found Asian men unappealing. Also, they recognized that acceptance and upward social mobility meant discarding Asian men for white Canadian men.

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During the past decade, however, the pattern of interracial relationships seems to have gradually shifted, as more and more Asian men are showing a preference for white women, and white women are showing a greater interest in Asian men. While the American media played a significant part in creating the image of the effete Asian man from the 1950's onward, the Hong Kong film industry during the late 1960's began to portray Asian men as potent, principled, romantic and above all virile. David Chang, and most notably, Bruce Lee,

symbolized the modern day freedom fighter in numerous Kung Fu movies. Bruce Lee was the Asian knight whose physical prowess was practically the only weapon necessary to fight evil, decadence and the exploitation of the weak.

With the growing impact of the Women's Liberation Movement, some white Canadian women began to question not only the traditionally superior position of men, but also the personal qualities of their white male lovers. Since most white men have never been stratified in a minority position, they were unable to understand the magnitude of women's distress, frustration and powerlessness. But many Chinese Canadian men, because of their own minority status, recognized the plight of the white North American women in their struggle for equality and dignity. This fact, along with the new image of Asian virility, has prompted an increasing number of white Canadian women to seek out relationships with such Asian men.

As an Asian man, I do not find the image of Asian men represented by the Chinese macho Bruce Lee as the most accurate or positive one, but it is certainly a vast improvement over the asexual, 'inscrutable' Charlie Chan or pigtailed Hop Sing. The image of Asian men will never come close to reflecting reality until we begin to eradicate the false images created by decades of Hollywood movies. In a world in which we are bombarded every day by negative stereotypes of ourselves it is essential that we gain some creative control over the media which presently distort us. We must begin to tell our own story and take pride in our own sexuality.

Johnny Fong teaches high school in Vancouver, B.C.



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OUT OF THE SHADOWS

By Gerald Chan

Hogtown burning. As neon lights draw flashing arrays across the darkening sky, the air pulsates and thickens in the heat of the city crowd. Surging in from every artery of the main street is disco music blaring out from rolled-down car windows, while drivers and strollers fight their ways into the 'Strip'. A hot pot of the incongruous, clear-faced suburbans merge conspicuously with the calculating locals; beaten bums share the same roads with fine-clothed trendies. Flocks of kids emerge from the subway, replenishing those dissipated. Girls wide-eyed and gigglish, boys put on their tough-guy smiles. There are different causes for celebration, but one form of ceremony--the reality of mass existence for every nameless individual.

Threading his way through the crowd, a boy moves aimlessly. His eyes vacant, cast in many directions. Coming to a restaurant window facing the street, he stares at the kids chewing solemnly on their Big Macs. Instinctively, one of his arms shoots up to smoothen his black hair; but as soon as the motion begins, it dies. The reflection of a strange-looking creature has appeared in the window, with one arm half-raised, and features carved bluntly out of yellow wax. Pained, he flees and disappears into the dark crowd.

I came to this country seven years ago. That summer in 1972, hundreds of kids were flown in by commercial jet airplanes from the Orient --and I was one of them. It may sound overtly melodramatic, but I was terribly naive and starry-eyed at that time -- with a blooming sexuality to boot.

What followed is too tedious to mention, and I would be the first one to fall asleep listening to the details. It should suffice to say that I settled no better or no worse than the other kids, although with some individual differences. The process of acculturation taught me some valuable lessons on the similarities and dissimilarities between cultures: the simple, unpretentious 'me first' approach of North America versus the altruistic, yet potentially stifling rituals of most Asian cultures, and the common principle of sexism that runs across them.



Oppression is often a two-way affair. For example, stemming out of ignorance, some white folks needed to act out their prejudice to safeguard their own interests. On the other hand, the insecurity which arose from language problems and cultural differences have made some members of ethnic groups retreat into their own ghettos, accompanied by strong resentment against their 'oppressors'. This interplay of oppression, both inflicted by other and ourselves, underlies the relationships between racial groups, as well as the relationships between men and women, the mainstream and the 'deviants'. What surprises me, however, is the lack of understanding and mutual support between oppressed minority groups. Busy dealing with their own problems, they seldom get together to fight back against the common sources of oppression. Allowing their differences to stretch, they keep themselves weak by following the prevalent prejudices against other groups and/or by staying apart.

In a dimly-lit parlour, the boy digs out a quarter from his pocket and feeds it into a pinball machine. Rows of lights light up. The noises around him are chaotic, but they only add to the excitement of those present. Standing not far away from him, another boy is deeply engrossed in his individual game. Clad in tight blue jeans, the latter bumps and curses against the machine which he clutches intensely with his hands. The boy has no desire to play now. Casting his eyes down, he can sense every single movement made by his neighbour.

I am Chinese, and the best that I can do is speak about people like myself. If the Chinese people form an isolated community of their own, then there are among us individuals who are more isolated than others. Shameful of the so-called homosexual 'vice', we are often alienated, pressured, and may remain secretive with regard to 'it' throughout our lives.

Homosexuality was not a sin in Ancient China. More than anything else, it was looked upon as a naughty fetish indulged in by countless men and women, although their duty of 'continuing the family line' would never be removed from them. Very few written records on the subject have been preserved up to this day; but whenever they are read or talked about, these writings, mostly in the form of legends and anecdotes, would evoke a straight-forward, matter-of-fact kind of atmosphere. Stories such as 'sharing the peach'¹, the homosexual experiences of the heroes in *Chin Ping Mei* and *Dream of the Red Chamber*, do not contain any trace of the bitterness and doom which characterizes most of the literature by modern, often closeted homosexual writers. The 'Yin and Yang' principle of human sexuality, rendering homosexuality as a legitimate facet of the diverse carnal/spiritual aspects of human love. It is a surprisingly advanced and liberal attitude, even when judged by modern Western standards. From what I have read and heard, I suspect that this attitude is similar to that of most other Asian cultures, including those of Japanese and Indians.

This acceptance of homosexuality, however, has diminished under the invasion by Western political-economic powers. Much as the Jews who denounced homosexuality out of the need to protect their race and Judaism, the spread of Judeo-Christian values continued through most western countries, and eventually made an impact on Asian countries. Burdened by the problem of over-population, most of the governments of Asia had to set stricter moral and behavioural standards in order to maintain control of the masses. In the process, homosexuality was condemned and attached with a lot of derogatory labels. Nowadays, most Asian government officials are tongue-tied about the subject, either declaring it non-existent or putting it down as the peculiar sickness of decadent capitalism. Although the Chinese Communist government made a statement recently declaring homosexual men and women productive citizens, it remains doubtful where the Government will stand when the economical and political situation of the country changes again.

Countering further erosion of traditional values, a repressive trend has also developed in the East. More barriers have been set up to block out newer Western ideas--which include feminism and gay liberation. Call them cultural blocks-- or backlashes if you like, but these ideas have never fitted well in the first place. Much like dresses of the wrong sizes and colours, they do not fit comfortably on Asian sensibilities. While activists over there are busy braving against opposi-

tions and making the necessary adjustments/innovations to suit their particular needs, gay men and lesbians are becoming more frustrated as no enlightenment is yet in sight. Even in places where 'gay bars' or similar institutions are allowed, closetry and the cynical "Boys in the Band" type of mentality persist.

Walking by a well known gay bar, several hoodlums spit from their cars, yelling "ah so" and "faggot". The boy blushes and quickens his steps, just as a tall man stumbles out of the dark entrance of the bar. Their eyes interlock. A faintness takes over and his heart beats violently, but he lets his feet go past the man. Moments later, they are far apart.

Although more fortunate in the sense that there is now wider access to the gay media and establishments, Asianadian gays and lesbians have not 'come out' en masse on this part of the continent. Pressure still exists which forces them into wedlocks and hiding, as close ties within families and peer groups linger on. Same-sex bondings, which are traditionally strong among Asians, male and female, do not flourish particularly well in a society which is extremely uptight and suspicious even about a casual same-sex friendship. Discrimination becomes more severe when a person is both Asianadian and openly gay, for his/her chance of getting a good job decreases as the number of times of getting 'name-called' increases. Oppression, both real and imagined, nail the closet doors shut and lock many of us in for good.

Even when a person is 'out', there seem to be certain ground rules to follow: 1) Don't ever talk about gays to your fellow Asians, let alone to whites. 2) Avoid other Asians in gay bars and/or equivalent establishments. 3) Never tell your parents about 'it'. Gay Asianadians tend to avoid each other basically because they want to keep a low profile. ("God, this entire world is taken over by those yellow bastards, even gay bars!") As far as coming out to the parents is concerned, the only Asian person I know of who tried to do so was called 'half-dead' and almost drowned by his aging mother.

While the gay liberation movement continues its struggle on this continent, it remains a predominantly white, middle class movement. The kinds of responses an Asian would likely get from within the community itself are quite mixed. On one hand, gay men and lesbians who are still having a hard time relating to



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their 'own kind' would have even less time and energy to discover their feelings toward the brownish, the yellowish, and the black ones. Hostility stemming from childhood education on 'Chinks' and 'Japs' does not help a white brother to love his yellow brothers any better, nor is one likely to love 'flat nose' and 'short legs' when blond hair and pink skin are what they advertise on TV and in the newspapers. At the other extreme, there are those who are infested with a case of 'yellow fever', who either treat Asian men and women as exotic play things, or as security blankets in old age. These do not exclude, of course, those white men and women who possess genuine respect and passion for our being what we are.

It is apparent that there is a great need for help among Asianadian gays and lesbians out there. But such help should ideally come not from our white brothers and sisters, but from those who are facing the problems themselves. No one can offer help to those who are not ready to help themselves in the first place. A lot of consciousness needs to be raised, and a lot of conflicts need to be resolved. In the process, a separate movement may be required specifically for and by Asianadian gays and lesbians. But as most social movements have their own branches, a separate movement may help to bring about universal freedom in a more realistic and effective manner.

Exhausted. Tired. He returns to his apartment, alone--as he had left it. Although he denies it, he has seen what he wanted to see. Maybe tomorrow he will face the fact, or will keep on wandering outside the doors. But a decision has to be made eventually. Soon.

1. One of the first recorded instances of male homosexuality in Chinese history. It involves Duk Ling (circa 500 B.C.), who was the head of a state, and his lover Mi Tzy-hsia.

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ARE THE SANSEI AVOIDING EACH OTHER?

By Ami Chiyo Hori

One does not even have to refer to the latest marriage statistics to realize the fact that an increasing number of Japanese Canadians are choosing white Canadians as lovers and marriage partners. Recently, while strolling through downtown Toronto, I counted nineteen racially mixed (East Asian - white) couples within the space of one hour. Thirty years ago the sight of a Japanese (or Chinese) Canadian walking hand in hand in public with a white person would have probably triggered a volley of derogatory remarks from other whites. Thirty years ago, when Canadians of Japanese ancestry were finally granted the right to vote, we were still considered unassimilable, enemy aliens by the dominant white majority. Today, however, the racial boundary which was once a solid, impervious line, has indeed become blurred in terms of male - female relationships. Among the Japanese Canadians, dating and mating outside the Asian race has in fact become the norm. Even within my own circle of Sansei friends and relatives between the ages of 17 and 42, only six out of 32 individuals are dating or are married to fellow Sansei. My extended family includes a Danish Canadian, a French-Canadian, a Ukrainian Canadian, five Irish Canadians--and several British Canadians.

In reviewing the academic literature on intermarriage involving Japanese North Americans, I discovered that this phenomenal pattern is not peculiar to my family--nor is it restricted to ethnically diverse metropolises such as Toronto. In a 1976 article in *Rikha*, sociologist Gordon Hirabayashi notes that the rate of intermarriage for Japanese Canadians in Lethbridge, Alberta alone was 82% between 1970-74.¹ This statistic is startling when we consider the fact that Lethbridge has a fairly high concentration of Japanese Canadians in its population. Thus the outmarriage phenomenon cannot be solely attributed to the post-World War II dispersal program. In light of the rapidly augmenting rate of intermarriage in southern Alberta, Hirabayashi poses the question: "Is there some kind of ethnic self-hatred? When 20 out of 22 marriages are intermarriages, it almost appears as though the Sansei are deliberately avoiding each other."²

As a Sansei woman whose 'cultural identity' has been clouded for too long by uncertainty, the suggestion of 'ethnic self-hatred' struck a particularly sensitive chord within me. It also spawned a number of other questions in my mind. How do Sansei men and women perceive their sexuality in relation to each other--and in relation to white Canadians? How do the rates of Japanese Canadian outmarriage compare with those of the Chinese Canadians? Are the rates still higher for women than for men? What role did the evacuation play in the development of this phenomenon? What are the implications for the future? And how valid is the claim of ethnic self-hatred? In an effort to begin to explore some of these questions and to clarify and substantiate my own ideas, I examined what various social scientists

have had to say on the subject--and more importantly, I listened to several Sansei men and women candidly reveal their thoughts and feelings in a series of informal interviews. The responses which I obtained from them (and in some cases, from their parents and lovers) often echoed my own experience and suggested to me the existence of certain common threads in the Japanese Canadian psyche. The present article is by no means a definitive socio-psychological analysis of the dating and mating behaviour of the Sansei. It is merely an attempt, a subjective attempt to sensitize Asianadians and non-Asian Canadians to the delicate and complex issues surrounding a social phenomenon which is profoundly shaping the 'Japanese Canadian identity'.

Historically speaking, the proscription against intermarriage has served as a sensitive mechanism for maintaining the boundaries between different racial and ethnic groups.³ Therefore, the dramatic incline in the rate of Japanese Canadian intermarriage over the last decade indicates the extent to which we have allowed ourselves to become assimilated into the white middle class mainstream. But despite the fact that Japanese Canadians have become one of the most respected, 'upwardly mobile' and unobtrusive minority groups in the Canadian *ethnic mosaic*, do we actually feel like equal citizens in this society? Have we completely crossed the boundary into the English Canadian milieu--or do we still feel like 'cultural marginals', vacillating somewhere between two groups?

Social scientist, Kurt Lewin, theorized that the individual requires a strong sense of ethnic identification with either the in-group culture or the dominant culture in order to establish a secure feeling of belonging. And without such security there will be a tendency towards ethnic self-hatred and in-group denial. According to Lewin:

There are persons whose whole life-situation is characterized by such uncertainty about their belonging, resulting from standing near the margin of groups. This is typical for instance of the *nouveau riches* or of other persons crossing the margin of social classes. It is typical furthermore of members of religious or national minority groups everywhere who try to enter the main group... It is characteristic of individuals crossing the margin between social groups that they are not only uncertain about their belonging to the group they are ready to enter, but also about their belonging to the group they are leaving.⁴

Lewin's theory takes on greater validity when we consider the case of the Japanese Canadians. Unlike our Chinese Canadian counterparts, we Sansei lack a strong sense of ethnic identification and solidarity.



We may attend Japanese churches and community centres and occasionally dine in Japanese restaurants, but nowhere in Canada do we have well-defined, cohesive "Little Tokyos" or "Japantowns". Furthermore, most Sansei do not know how to speak the Japanese language. Thus we are deprived of one of the most powerful means of transmitting and maintaining our cultural heritage. Some white Canadians, who cannot differentiate between race and nationality, find our inability to converse in Japanese shameful and incomprehensible, since our physical features blatantly categorize us as 'Japanese'. Despite the absurdity of such ignorant reasoning, these attitudes can help foster the development of a banana self-concept, i.e. yellow on the outside, white on the inside. Stigmatized by this insulting label, we are susceptible to feelings of inferiority and confusion because we know that we do not identify entirely with either the white majority group -- nor our cousins in Japan. Undoubtedly, this sense of not quite belonging has a significant effect upon our interactions with whites, particularly in the fundamental area of sexuality. As one 25 year-old Sansei woman openly admits:

You know, until just recently I had never seriously considered the possibility of going to bed with a man of my own race. Now, however, I actually feel kind of...cheated because I never had the opportunity to develop an intimate relationship with a fellow Asian. Throughout my school days I was the only ethnic, let alone the only oriental kid on my block. I grew up in a lower middle class area of Toronto which

happened to be situated on the periphery of a district populated almost exclusively by upper middle class whites of British origin. And since I was never sent to Japanese language school -- and since our family did not attend a church with a Japanese congregation, there was little opportunity for me to even meet any Japanese boys. Yes, I can clearly see how I....I became, well -- white-washed. Throughout my childhood I deeply resented my black hair, narrow eyes, short legs, flat face -- yellow skin. I felt uncomfortably conspicuous and inferior among my classmates. And when I first started dating around the age of 16, I used to feel rather self-conscious in public, wondering how other people were perceiving me with these tall white men.

Another Sansei woman in her late twenties echoes the same feelings of self-consciousness and inferiority:

I don't know why, but the sight of a mixed--oriental-white couple immediately attracts my attention. I hate to admit it, but I'm still a victim of the old female rivalry syndrome. If I see a Japanese or Chinese woman with a white guy I still try to imagine myself in her place, comparing myself to her. And if she is really attractive, the ridiculous adolescent feelings of inferiority bubble up again.

In attempting to account for the vulnerable self-concept of many Sansei, I believe that we pour too much psychic energy into blaming ourselves. If we must isolate one common factor to be held culpable, it is history-- the history of the Japanese Canadian evacuation during World War II. For those of us who grew up during the fifties and sixties, this tragedy of racist hysteria dramatically altered the direction of our lives-- both demographically and psychologically. By instilling in our Nisei parents an unjustified sense of shame and ethnic inferiority, it has significantly influenced our present attitudes towards ourselves and our pattern of interpersonal relationships.

When our parents and grandparents were herded eastward from B.C. during the late forties, they made a concerted effort to gain acceptance in this country by adopting white, middle class values.⁵ The hostile discrimination which they experienced during the war had made them disturbingly aware of the fact that they were physically different from the dominant group. Because the Japanese were still considered the enemy--'the yellow peril', the Nisei defended themselves against further racist actions by trying to erase the past and conceal their *Japaneseness*. They gave their children English first names and geographically scattered themselves to avoid any accusations of ghettoization. Even today, "it is rare to find two Japanese families living within the same block."⁶ By weakening the bonds of ethnic solidarity and diminishing the chances for in-group contact, the evacuation has obviously contributed to the Sansei's rapid assimilation, as measured by our growing preference for whites as lovers and spouses.

Mrs. K., a Nisei mother of six, expresses a prevalent Nisei attitude regarding interracial marriage, as she has not encouraged her children to marry within the Japanese Canadian community:

If my children marry *hakujin* (white) people, they can more easily move into Canadian soci-

ety. It is important to me to give them freedom of choosing. You see, I was sort of like a picture bride even though I was born in B.C. When I was 18 my parents wanted me to marry this man who had just arrived from Japan. I had never seen him before, but I married him--this stranger, because at that time all girls had to obey their parents. But now the generation of my children is different. I don't want to control who my daughters or my sons marry because I wholly understand the suffering of this obligation marriage. Luckily, I have managed to give some of my children knowledge of Japanese culture. They're proud to be Japanese even though they're all married to *hakujin*. They don't have to marry their own race to prove they're proud of Japanese. I think this identity-assimilation thing you mentioned earlier is sometimes made too much of. Of course, I would feel more comfortable and at home with a Sansei son-in-law or daughter-in-law, but when it comes right down to it, I would be happy as long as my children were happy in love. English, Greek, Jewish, Pakistani, Korean, or Japanese-- or whatever. Who cares, as long as we're all -- human underneath the skin. Just because, my son is married to a German girl, for example, doesn't mean he has anything against Japanese girls.

Mrs. K. raises the recurring question: Does the interracial tendency in sexual relationships necessarily equal ethnic self-hatred? According to a 34 year-old Sansei man, such an equation is too simplistic:

I wouldn't go so far as to say that we hate our own kind. We don't make a *conscious* effort to avoid each other. I think it's just an inevitable outcome of our social conditioning in a WASP society. Also, I can only speak for myself. I don't think you can scientifically analyze and make broad generalizations about something as complex and individual as the variables involved in sexual attraction. It's all so subjective.

A 23 year-old Sansei man offers a more specific and personal explanation for interracial physical attraction:

Personally, I tend to be more turned on by the kind of beauty exemplified by Jacqueline Bisset and Catherine Deneuve, rather than that of Adrienne Clarkson, for example. I mean I've met some strikingly gorgeous Chinese, Japanese and Korean women, but I tend to judge such women as beautiful because they more closely resemble the white ideal of beauty--long legs, slender noses, high cheekbones. Also, I guess that as an Asian man--I know this will probab-

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ly sound really sexist and racist-- but I find that I'm more attracted to European women because they're different from myself. There - fore, they have a kind of *exotic* appeal for me --just as a lot of white men might find Japanese women 'exotic' and vice-versa.

The remarks expressed by the Sansei man above speak volumes on a key factor involved in many instances of interracial attraction. In striving to gain acceptance in the dominant group, the Japanese Canadians, like some other 'visible minorities', have adopted Caucasian standards of beauty.⁷ At the same time, we have internalized, to varying degrees, the offensive mass media stereotypes of Asians. It is therefore understandable that many Sansei react by rejecting certain Japanese attributes for the supposedly more favourable white stereotypes epitomized by Robert Redford and Catherine Deneuve. A 27 year-old Sansei woman, married to a Jewish Canadian man, provides further evidence of this phenomenon:

When I was a child I demanded to have the blonde Chatty Cathy doll-- the blonde Barbie doll. As

an adolescent, I was tortured by feelings of inadequacy because I couldn't come close to looking like Cheryl Tiegs in the *Seventeen* magazines. And at that time, Yoko Ono was an embarrassment to me. My romantic idols were not Toshio Mifune or James Shigeta, but Alan Bates and Marcello Mastroianni. It never occurred to me that these men were of a different race than mine. Now that I'm married--and very happily -- to a Jewish Canadian, I somehow feel a more urgent need to discover something which I was denied as a child -- my Japaneseness. I guess I envy my husband because he's still so strongly connected to his Jewish culture.

While some Sansei women are likely to be susceptible to feelings of inferiority as a result of their failure to measure up to the white ideal of sexual attractiveness, their visible Japanese features can, at the same time, render them particularly desirable in the eyes of white men.⁸ Unfortunately, there are still some white Canadian men who consciously or unconsciously seek out relationships with Japanese Canadian women on the superficial basis of our media image of passive

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sexuality and submissiveness. According to Dawn Kiyoye Ono, in a recent article in *The Asianadian*, the Hollywood movies of the fifties and sixties are obvious culprits in instilling this China doll stereotype in the minds of the dominant white group: "For too long, I have writhed in anguish watching cool William Holden manhandling Nancy Kwan--or watching the legendary macho king, Marlon Brando, carressing lotus blossom geishas with his mumbling voice. For too long, I have suffered in silence listening to white Canadian men tell me that I would 'probably make an excellent mistress'." 9

Although the Hollywood image of Asian women might constitute a partial source of a white Canadian man's attraction to a Japanese Canadian woman, it would be too easy and misleading to attribute this racist-sexist attitude to *all* white men involved with Japanese Canadian women. As stated earlier, the variables involved in interracial attraction are much more complex and unpredictable. An Anglo Canadian man, who's been married to a Sansei woman for the past eleven years, represents an encouraging contradiction to Dawn Ono's generalization about the motives of the white North American male:

The qualities which drew me to my wife, Juli, were her assertiveness, independence and creativity. I married an individual woman, not a Hollywood Suzy Wong stereotype -- and I would like to think that we have an equal relationship. Okay, of course the fact that she's Japanese was at first what made her distinctive and intriguing to me. At that time, 15 years ago, Asians comprised a much smaller minority at the university we went to. I really used to resent the kinds of comments I'd get from some of my so-called friends when Juli and I first started dating. These guys seemed to think I had some sort of fetish. I'm afraid that this used to be a common assumption made about white men with 'oriental' women. Another common assumption was that men who dated Asian women were expressing a form of rebellion against the status quo--proving their egalitarian, tolerant attitude towards racial minorities. I suppose some actually do *seek out* oriental women. But I do not identify myself as one of those men. The fact that my wife is of Japanese descent is not something of which I'm constantly aware. Her ethnicity is very much a facet of her identity. There are several inexplicable ways in which she's very Japanese-- in terms of her style of self-expression and traces of Buddhist thinking. Her *Japaneseness* is an added plus in my estimation, not a fetish. It does not make me feel any sort of majority status-power or anything. It simply provides an enriching dimension to our relationship.

Twenty years ago, Japanese Canadian women far outnumbered their male counterparts in outmarriage rates. Today, however, the Sansei and Yonsei men are rapidly catching up as the idea of approaching a white woman no longer constitutes the same kind of risk for them as it once did. In a society in which men are expected to make the first move in heterosexual relationships, Japanese Canadian men used to be rather reticent about initiating contact with white women, not only because of the acute sense of shame associated with possible rejection,¹⁰--but also because such a step represented an audacious tresspassing into sacred white territory,



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declaring one's self equal to the supposedly superior group. Today the rising socioeconomic status and educational level of the Sansei have given them a much more positive image, not only in their own eyes, but also in the eyes of the white majority. Generally speaking, white Canadians have become much more tolerant about Japanese Canadian men dating and marrying white women. But now and then submerged racist feelings find their way to the surface. As one Sansei man reveals:

I think it's much more acceptable in this society for a Japanese woman to be seen with a white man than for a Japanese man to be seen with a white woman. I guess it's because Canadians are more used to perceiving Asian women as sexual dolls in movies like "World of Suzy Wong", while they perceive Asian men as asexual houseboys and mathematicians. I've received both curious stares and hostile glares from whites and from Asians when I walk down the street with my girlfriend who happens to be blond, attractive--and three inches taller than me. I suppose all these strangers are wondering what she sees in me. I don't know. She tells me that she finds me more sensitive than most white men.

The statement above suggests another explanation for the growing outmarriage rate of Japanese Canadian men. It is possible that more white women are looking to mi-

nority status men, particularly Asian men, as potential alternatives to the white North American male whom they associate with the traditional pattern of oppression and dominance. Also, thanks to the feminist movement, more women are realizing that the rigid definitions of 'masculinity' and 'femininity' are neither valid nor tolerable.

In an analysis of the Japanese-American outmarriage phenomenon, Akemi Kikumura and Harry Kitano conclude that the rate "will continue to grow with each new successive generation, so that in time there will no longer be a 'pure' Japanese-American group."¹¹ Is the forecast for the Japanese Canadians equally gloomy? Comparing the 1941 racist hostility towards Japanese-Canadians to our present acceptance by the dominant society, as measured by our intermarriage rates, we have indeed made a gigantic leap in terms of intercultural harmony and social equality. But, unfortunately, we have done so at the expense of our Japanese identity. If what remains of our inherent Japaneseness is worth keeping alive--or resurrecting, then we will have to begin searching within ourselves for a way to avoid drowning completely in a sea of white-Anglos. The implication of the Kikumura-Kitano study is that we Sansei hold a certain degree of power in that we can contribute to our cultural survival, or cultural extinction through our selection of marriage partners. But does this mean that we have to automatically start 'loving our own kind'--and reject intimate relationships with white Canadians? Such an extreme measure is of course unrealistic and ultimately racist. As a 27 year-old Sansei woman points out:

I've found that it takes far more than a shared racial strain to make a relationship work and create a bond of trust. It scarcely matters what colour a lover or husband is--white, black--purple, who cares. Choosing someone of your own racial group is no guarantee that there's going to be a greater degree of understanding--or equality--or more orgasms. Unfortunately in this society there are no guarantees of anything. It's just so damn hard to find anyone--regardless of race, who shares the same values, who is a giving, sensitive human being....What do I look for in a man? A sense of humour, inner strength and integrity, intelligence -- but above all, someone who's not afraid to express feelings of tenderness and vulnerability.

In a culturally diverse society like Canada it is particularly unrealistic and self-defeating to place restrictions on whom we should or should not be sleeping with, since we could be cutting ourselves off from potentially satisfying and enriching relationships if we decided to avoid all whites in bed. What we can set as a reasonable objective, however, is the development of a cultural reciprocity wherein each partner maintains and shares his/her valid ethnic identity--and not one cultural orientation dominates the relationship. In a society in which one major group holds all the power and establishes the moral and political tone for the rest of the nation, the creation of reciprocal relationships between minority and majority status men and women requires a conscious and relentless effort. In the case of the Japanese Canadians, this struggle for cultural survival is especially difficult as our bonds of ethnic solidarity were almost torn asunder by the trauma of mass evacuation and its attendant psychological consequences.

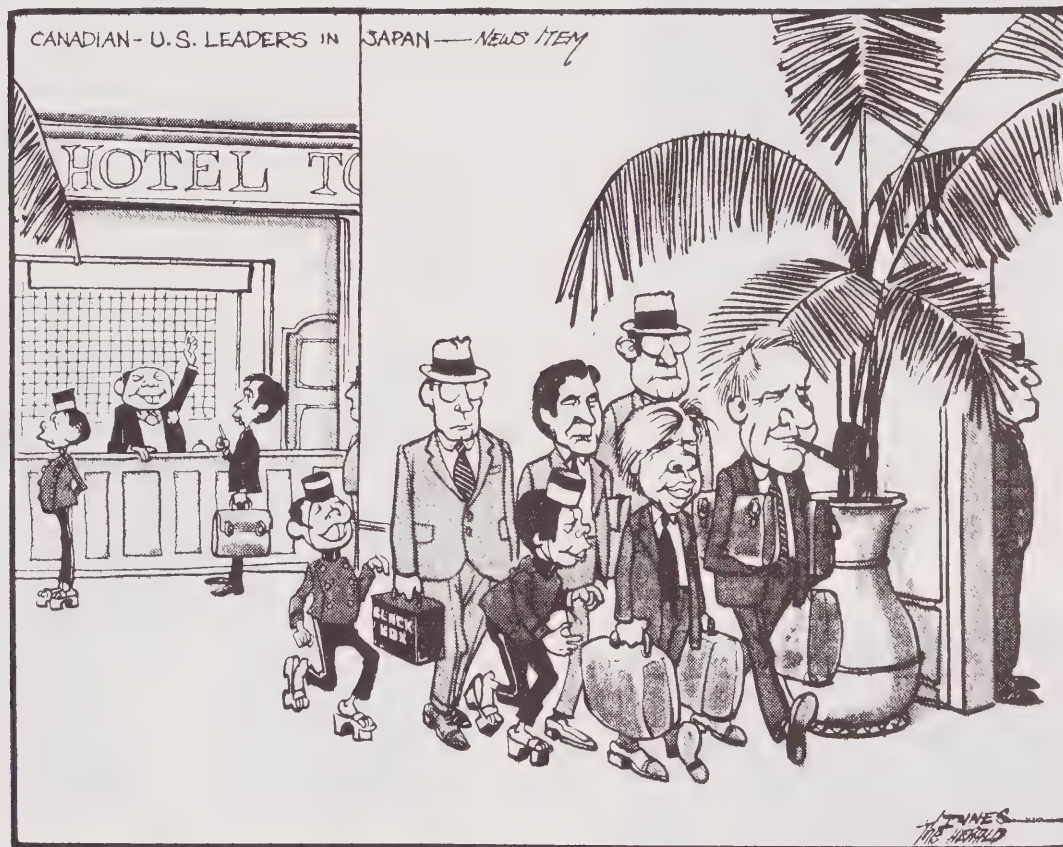
Obviously, part of the solution to slowing down the process of assimilation lies in fortifying our group bonds and attempting to undo the damage of the past. We can begin by heightening our awareness and understanding of the past and how it has influenced our present self-concept and social interactions. Another essential step is that of smashing the condescending Asian stereotypes which the mass media has fed to us throughout our lives--the stereotypes which have led us to believe in the superiority of white-Anglos and the inferiority of our own race. By taking greater pride in ourselves and our ancestral heritage, we might be able to close the gap which presently divides Sansei men and women and blinds many of us from recognizing each other as potential sexual partners.

I think that the hopeful key to retaining a 'pure' Japanese Canadian group can be found in the fact that self-identity isn't static--but constantly evolving. It is an organic entity open to a timeless range of influences. Thus, we are not doomed to an eternal state of 'cultural marginality'. We hold the power to strengthen the ethnic dimension of our identity. By discovering our Japaneseness and nurturing networks of communication with fellow Sansei, we will not only widen our possible choices for interpersonal relationships, but will also be able to enter into relationships with members of the existing white group without the fear of obliterating a precious piece of our selves in the process. By affirming our Japanese ethnicity we can perhaps cross the racial boundary without the danger of drowning.

FOOTNOTES

1. Hirabayashi, Gordon, "From Enemy Alien to Intermarriage in One Third of a Century: Southern Alberta", *Rikha*, Autumn 1976, Vol. 3, No. 3, p. 7.
2. Ibid., p. 7.
3. Tinker, John N., "Intermarriage and Ethnic Boundaries: The Japanese American Case", *Journal of Social Issues*, 1973, Vol. 29, No. 2, p. 50.
4. Lewin, Kurt, *Resolving Social Conflicts*, (New York: Harper and Bros. Publishing, 1948), pp. 147-148.
5. Adachi, Ken, *The Enemy That Never Was*, (Toronto: McClelland and Steward Ltd., 1976), p. 355.
6. Ibid., p. 356.
7. Tinker, p. 59.
8. Kitano, Harry H.L., *Japanese Americans: the evolution of a subculture*, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969), p. 149.
9. Ono, Dawn Kiyoye, "White Male Supremacy and the 'Oriental Doll'", *The Asianadian*, Vol. 1, No. 3, p. 25.
10. Tinker, p. 58.
11. Kikumura, Akemi and Harry H.L. Kitano, "Interracial Marriage: A Picture of the Japanese Americans", *Journal of Social Issues*, 1973, Vol. 29, No. 2, p. 79.

Dubious Award



"Clark . . . C . . . I . . . a . . ."

THE DUBIOUS AWARD for Summer 1979 goes to: a cartoonist named INNES -- the person responsible for the cartoon above which appeared on the editorial page of The Calgary Herald, Tuesday, June 26, 1979.

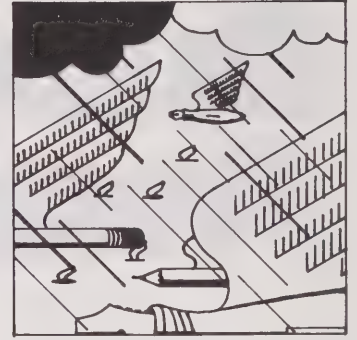
that they are all charmingly docile natives of the locale, bowing ingratiatingly to the great white powers. We can almost hear them uttering in pigeon-English, "Yes, master."

Comments from the Award Jury:

This cartoon reminds us of the fact that the offensive stereotype of Asians as subservient, myopic, little children has not yet been erased from the news media. Here we are confronted with cute, identical, buck-toothed Japanese bellhops in a Tokyo hotel during the arrival of the North American leaders: Jimmy and Joey. Scurrying about the lobby on cumbersome wooden clogs, these bellhops indeed evoke a humorous response. And it is this seemingly harmless humour which is the dangerous element, for it cleverly camouflages a subtle form of racism. The buck-toothed smiles, exaggerated diminutiveness and uniformity of the Japanese men depicted here reinforce their inferior status and imply

Both Asian- and non-Asian-Canadian readers have criticized *The Asianadian* for being hyper-sensitive and negativistic since we "seem to dwell on attacking racist stereotypes". In response to such comments we would like to state that ideally, there should be no need for a Dubious Award column in our magazine. Ideally, in a world free from racial and sexual exploitation we would not have to explore and expose what is wrong with our society. But as long as cartoons such as the one above continue to appear in Canadian periodicals, we shall be forced to speak out against them. Racism in Canada is pervasive and insidious. We cannot simply ignore its presence and hope that it will disappear by itself.

Poetry



woman in the room

Truth is a frequent visitor
to the woman in the room,
stares at her across the table,
stirring her tea with a spoon.
Stands beside her in the mirror,
with a knowing grin on his face,
as she fumbles here and fumbles there
with a nickel's worth of lace.
Truth speaks in tiny creaks
and muffled terms of endearment
as lying rigid in her bed she hears
lovers beyond the wall.

- may seung jew



Snow

snow like the layers of these cool sheets
myself walking backwards along the long tunnel,
invoking.
the image and the echoes
emerge on cue
to disintegrate
like ashes.

the living fragments repeatedly lost,
richly on the verge of coalescence.

But at times
in a crowd under a hot sun
your arms finding me would not be unexpected,
assumed like the music,
and at times I find myself
hurrying to round a corner.

- may seung jew

when i get

when i get
to embrace
the wide horizons
of your shoulders

when i lie
sun-indolent
on your disputed plains

i sigh,
regretting
you too, prefer
some blinding moments in the sands
to fusion of our continents.

- may seung jew

Love Song from a Young Lady to an Older Gentleman

my omniscient buddha
somnolent in the sun
regards the mystery of his navel
in profound meditation.

oh my celestial buddha
immobile as a rock
save when dreams of naked limbs
stir the sleeping rock.

I have seen our deity in underwear and socks.

when they genuflect before
another god,
and the cold rain pours
through your deserted shrine,
I will tend the broken rocks,
patient, chaste, and unconverted.

- may seung jew



Bitter words
Thoughtless speech
Strained rhythm
Accused
Intelligence impaired
Uneducated
Inclined to observe illiteracy
I fear for not knowing why
Intelligent you
Uneducated me.

- Namila B. Singh

when Night came

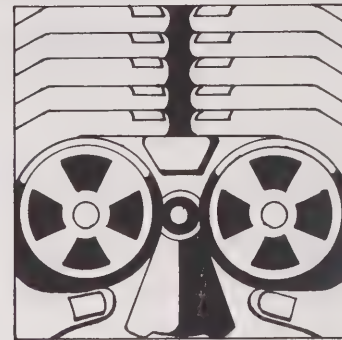
when Night came
devoured my Time
and then went on Its way
i stole Some back
from Its very Jaws
by the glow of my candlelight

my apron full
my hair undone
heart beating with haste
i crossed the chilly Milky Way
and stood
at Your ivory Feet

Now I
would be Keeper of the Night
Now I would take Night by Its insatiable Jaws
and gorge It
with My Time.

- may seung jew

Face to Face



Joy Kogawa is undoubtedly among the finest writers working in Canada today. Her acute sensitivity and craftsmanship are evident in two major collections of poetry: *A Choice of Dreams* (1974) and *Jericho Road* (1977). The wide range of themes and refreshingly original and powerful imagery in these two books make it difficult to slap any simplistic labels on her work. She writes about men and women, urban existence and the natural world, love and hate, birth and death, truth and illusion. In short, she is a prober of the human spirit, exploring with penetrating vision the agonies and ecstasies of what it means to be human. She is currently completing work on her first novel--a moving piece of writing which traces, through the process of memory, the lives of several generations of Japanese Canadians.

ASTANADIAN: Can you tell us something about your background?

KOGAWA: I was born in Vancouver like most other Nisei I guess. After Vancouver our family moved to Slocan.

ASTANADIAN: You must have been a small child at the time of the evacuation. Do you remember much about it? In one of your poems you mentioned that your parents were careful not to bruise you with bitterness. Did you, or do you--feel bitter?

KOGAWA: I've just gone through a long period of dredging up a lot of memories and sticking them in this book I'm writing. The thing is that the need to not remember was so great that a lot of memory was deliberately drowned. So what I've done is to force myself to remember and re-live some of that period. That's been healing and reconciling. I've been helped to see things in different ways. There was a long period of turning the feelings in inappropriate directions. I was seeing the short range and missed the background and the context that a long range provides and my energy and emotions were focussed inappropriately. So now I understand my parents better and feel a lot of admiration and love for the Issei. The bitterness was transformed during the writing. Unearthed first. And then, transformed and re-directed.

ASTANADIAN: So bitterness is a level of emotion that we can transcend to create more positive energy?

KOGAWA: I think it's a matter of not denying whatever is there. Say that our emotions are like water in a reservoir and some storm erupts and the sewage pipes burst and our water supply gets polluted. If that excrement that's floating about is our bitterness or rage or envy or whatever it is--we should know it--name it--expose it to the clear light of consciousness and deal with it. I think our purest and most powerful and essential emotion is compassion--love. And it's made available to us for our mutual sustenance, as we turf these other things out. The narrator in my book says she doesn't want to re-live the bitterness, but she must. Her aunt tells her denial is gangrene and she could die from it.

ASTANADIAN: Is this novel an unravelling of memory?

KOGAWA: "Unravelling" is a good word for it. There is an ideograph for 'passionate love' which is formed by the characters for 'heart', 'to tell'....and 'a long thread'. It is the unravelling of the thread which signifies passionate love. It is the telling of the long thread that shows that we care.

ASTANADIAN: Is the process of unravelling that you talk about in writing a kind of therapy, a way of working out inner conflicts?

KOGAWA: Not initially, not consciously, not in any kind of directed sense. But as I wrote I would find changes taking place within me. I guess that's what makes the art of writing such an absorbing activity--the participation involved and the way it affects you. But that's

true not only of writing, but of everything we do. Everything could be therapeutic in a sense, or its opposite.....Coming back to your earlier question about my feelings about the past-- it's not the actual facts of what happened that matters. It's our memory. It's the power of our minds to participate in our healing. We conspire with history to make it do for us whatever it is we choose. And our choices define us. We discover who we are by the choices we make throughout the day at all crossroads.

ASIANADIAN: *How did you begin writing poetry?*

KOGAWA: I began writing poetry in about 1964. I had the notion that what was important in life was to love but there I was living the great lie, being in a married state but without loving enough. I felt the need for direction. I could admit that I was not loving but confessing that fact didn't open the path for love. Before '63 I was trying to write short stories but not getting anywhere. Around '64 when I had to find out what was deeper, I began to use my pen to figure out what my life was about. I was writing to figure out life, not living to write. And the poems began.

ASIANADIAN: *What kind of upbringing did you have in terms of 'sex role socialization'?*

KOGAWA: Strictly traditional. My mother is the old Japanese style mother: the woman is silent, gentle and obedient. Nothing is to be arrived at individually, but through consensus. All of that still influences me. I'm terribly indecisive and still too concerned about what other people think. I was talking to a friend the other day about audacity as a goal-- being able to come and go in this world with a sense of belonging and confidence. Perhaps that's un-Japanese--at least it's un-Nisei. I don't have that kind of audacity. Although in some ways I live a life that's unconventional, deep down I think I'm very conventional even though it may not appear so on the surface. Or is it the other way around? Anyway, I was brought up to be quiet and retiring and subservient--and there is a part of me that is still surprised if I'm taken seriously.

WHEN HE WAS CONCEIVED

when he was conceived
she was stone being carved
she opened to chisel
and the bit of crying
that hid in the rockiness
made the hard stone melt

when we were conceived
there were stones being carved
we asked questions
and from the valley came
the long long mist



ASIANADIAN: *What does the word 'sexuality' mean to you?*

KOGAWA: I think it's something that's changing. Sexual activity has in the past been imbued with a lot of significance but the meanings are changing. So there's confusion and people wonder what sexual language you're speaking. I think we need integrity of language so that meaning is not lost. I think our health arises out of our integrity..... I remember one reviewer saying that Joy Kogawa is obsessed with sexuality and I wondered how that came through in my poetry.

ASIANADIAN: *Did the reviewer arrive at this conclusion by taking lines out of context?*

KOGAWA: Well, I think he thought the poems were indicative of that obsession. I'm curious as to why I would have felt his statement as an attack. Maybe I didn't understand what he meant. Why should I mind being obsessed with sexuality, if I am--and maybe I am since I have had a lot of confusion about its meaning these days. But I wasn't particularly conscious of it when I was writing those poems.

ASIANADIAN: *Did your mother talk to you about sex, for example, when you had your first period?*

KOGAWA: I think the Japanese in general are very natural about their bodies, but my mother was a kind of mixture because she was brought up by English missionaries. And so she felt that sex was an animal activity



beneath humans. She had no trouble talking about things like menstruation, but she never did talk about sex. It was something to be kept hidden, not to be discussed. I think that has been more damaging than I have yet uncovered. The woman in my book, Naomi, says at one point, "Unless there is made present to me flesh, that declares in flesh to my flesh that we live, I will not believe." This woman has never been able to really live with her body and be proud of it. There are a lot of reasons for that. I'm like that too, in certain respects. In many of my earlier poems I was obsessed with the need for freedom -- freedom to go out there naked in the world and declare the reality of this body -- expel the truth--get out of the trap of pretending--the trap of denying the reality of sexuality.

ASIANADIAN: *Do you think that this denial of sexuality is something peculiarly Japanese?*

KOGAWA: As I stated earlier, I think the Japanese are basically natural about their bodies. And at the same time, it seems to me that one of the greatest things about the Japanese culture is that it has been able to preserve passion. And perhaps this has come about through that rigid control. The denial, the inability to talk openly about our passions in a strange way fuels a kind of power, I think. On one hand I can see the beauty of open sexuality, but on the other hand, I can see the value of that almost atomic, controlled passion. When you drive along a California beach with

all those kids lying about in the nude, you get the feeling that there's not very much passion there. It's all fun and open, but also child-like, innocent and passionless. If you really valued passion, then you would not value that California beach scene. In a society that is sexually open, you might pursue the increasingly forbidden. But if you're the kind of person who hates the kind of pain and suffering involved in passion, then you would choose easy warmth and openness. What do we do? We want to have our cake and eat it too. We want to touch the fire and not get burnt--to have all the impossibles.

ASIANADIAN: *Sooner or later in a discussion of our own sexuality, the topic of men arises. Florence Kennedy, an American feminist, has stated that "It takes a hell of a man to be better than no man at all."*

KOGAWA: Perhaps it's my social conditioning or the fairy tales I grew up with, and it's horrible to have to admit this, but I still have the image somewhere in the back of my mind of a man somewhere out there. Pathetic isn't it?

ASIANADIAN: *But a lot of women are still plagued by it. Because we've all been fed with this Prince Charming myth, it's overpowering. We know how ridiculous it is, yet we still believe consciously or unconsciously that he exists.*

KOGAWA: Even among my staunchly feminist friends, I don't know any women, aside from my lesbian friends, who do not feel that need for the magic knight. I mean he's not the same magic knight that used to exist, but he's still that one special person. I think about some women who've managed to live their entire lives without any close relationships with men and something inside me shudders. I would rather be able to look at these women and say "That's great. They've done it. They're strong." But this is not the way I feel.

SHE SENDS OLD PHOTOGRAPHS

I take the pictures
but not with match and flame
with fingertips and bandages
digging with careful fingernails
I peel the crackling memories
from his skin

brown as antique blood
brown as old frost on
dirty windows, I wipe the
dark stains from his eyes
my lips are red with rust

Note: All poems appearing in this interview are reprinted from *Jericho Road* (1977).

ASIANADIAN: Do you see the necessity for more alternatives to the traditional male-female relationship?

KOGAWA: Definitely. Also, I think that women today are looking for different qualities in men than they did before. Surely we've come to the point where we're no longer seeking domination, but rather, sensitivity and response-ability.

ASIANADIAN: It's difficult because one could so easily slip back into old, self-defeating patterns. How do you think the women's movement has affected the nature of male-female relationships?

KOGAWA: We're in a time of transition, a time of suffering and hope. The women's movement is part of this and contains both within it. It's hard to see where the visionaries are and to know what counts as evidence for hope, but for me the measure of the right direction is an internal peace. I am beginning to feel that one of our greatest enemies whether we are speaking in terms of male-female relationships-- or racial relations -- or class or age differences, is our own greed. If the women's movement in its legitimate attempt to equalize power doesn't attend to the greed in all our hearts, I don't think that it will revolutionize the nature of male-female relationships... so I think our fundamental battles are spiritual and have to do with the meanings we place on our lives. My primary identity then is not whether I'm a woman or a Japanese Canadian, or a writer, or mother, or a person who lives in a co-op -- but my identity is connected to what I believe life is about. That is--it's a spiritual identity that most concerns me. And when I say our battle is with greed, it doesn't mean that the only window I want to look out of is the economic window. I don't like the notion of looking out and seeing dollar signs stuck on the grass and leaves and clouds. But fighting greed is a big battle and I think we could all use help. We should form a Society for the Abolition of Greed -- S.A.G. What fights greed is justice. And the people who have the right to define justice are those who experience injustice. But I've moved away from your original question.

ASIANADIAN: Do you feel comfortable talking about your feelings publicly?

KOGAWA: Not particularly. That probably has to do with my background. But also what I'm aware of is the exis-

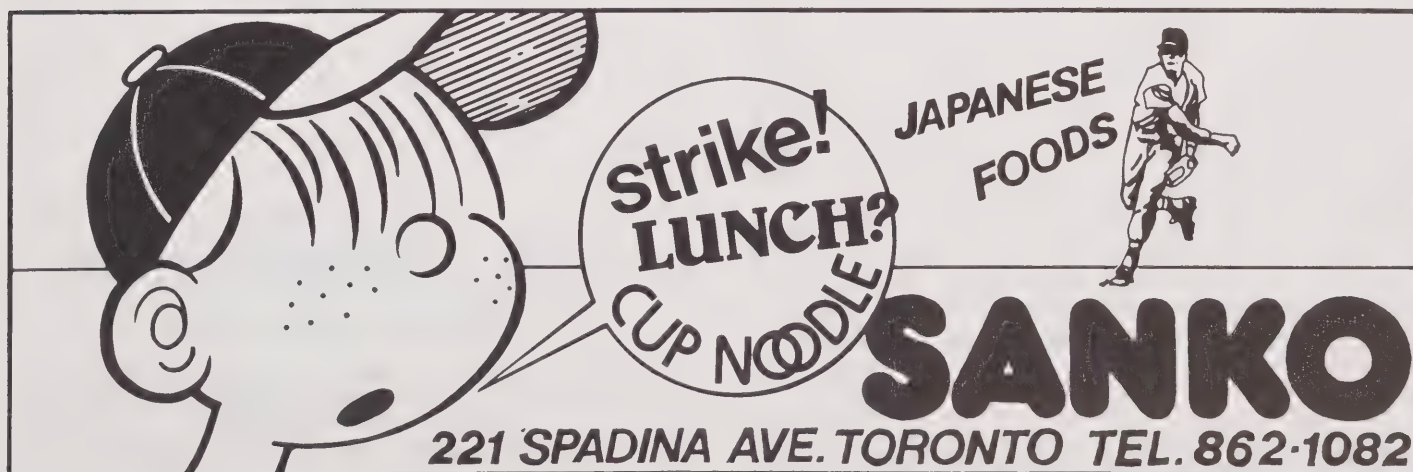
tence of the lie--especially with interviews and statements in print. I can blither away about truth and know all the while that there are lies lurking. Do I really want truth or have I sunk to the place where what I really want is the impression that I want truth. How do you get to the fine kernel of truth. I could define what I have or have not done sexually--I could make factual statements--but what truths would that reveal? I am a constrained person--primarily so that I can declare with safety, certain facts about my behaviour-- but there is a falseness in all that somewhere. It is an attitude rooted in fear. I believe that the world is made safer for us as we share our untellables with one another. But there needs to be a more accurate way for me to share than I yet have found.

ASIANADIAN: There's a kind of communication that cannot be expressed in words--because words are inadequate most of the time. Perhaps, if you're silent enough and the other person is silent enough, there will be a kind of communication on another level-- a different level that we're not used to listening to. Maybe that's why a certain woman can communicate with a certain man.... It's interesting--you mentioned earlier that you chose silence as a major motif in your novel. The use of silence is a traditional Japanese literary technique-- to leave sentences unfinished.

KOGAWA: I hadn't thought about that. It's just that my mother is not inclined to express herself through verbal speech. So there's a silent mother in my book, and a silent obasan -- a silent people. There are a lot of words about no words.

WHEN THE POET IN YOU

like a witch and warlock busily gathering
ingredients for our separate brews
we kissed with fiendish carefulness
(with tenderness? try tenderness)
we were lacquered liars webbing love
the words in our lungs growing wings
beating at paper clouds (try
silence, try mystery) but the tightest
web like our honest cries defied the
struggle of our lies (try anything)



strike!
LUNCH?

JAPANESE
FOODS

SANKO

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YOU DON'T COUNT, UNLESS YOU'RE COUNTED!

By Cheuk Kwan

"Directions for the 1980's" was the theme for the three-day Asian and Pacific American Education Conference held at the San Francisco Hilton Hotel on April 25-27, 1979. Co-sponsored by the National Association for Asian-American and Pacific Education (NAAAPE), the National Institute of Education, and the Asian Pacific American Concerns Staff of the US Office of Education, the conference and exhibition drew participants from across continental U.S., Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, Micronesia, as well as Canada. Although most of those who attended were teachers, educators, researchers and educational media producers, the conference also attracted various non-professionals concerned with the educational and cultural well-being of Asian and Pacific Americans.

It was also fitting that the conference was opened by two prominent Asian and Pacific Americans: California's Secretary of State March Fong Eu, who has a doctorate in Education; and Senator of the Guam Legislature Katherine Aguon. Following the opening session, the conference broke into eleven discussion groups, among them: educational policy-making, bilingual education, curriculum, higher education, child development, research, international education, and media.

Media

The more exciting presentations did not come from conference participants, but from a large television screen in the corner of a darkened conference room where we viewed various television programmes and film clips developed for and by Asian Americans. Originally produced as educational material aimed at students from kindergarten to high school, many of these presentations proved to be entertaining and instructional for the more mature audience as well. Notable among them were: *Bean Sprouts* -- a television series about Chinese American children and their friends; *Pearls* and *Pacific Bridges* -- two Asian American series combining historical and current perspectives. A very moving film in the *Pearls* series, produced by the Educational Film Center in Virginia, documents the 'return' of an east-coast Japanese American *nisei* to her World War II internment camp at Manzanar, and to her childhood home before the War in Oregon -- an encounter with her past that she could not bring herself to face for the past thirty-five years.

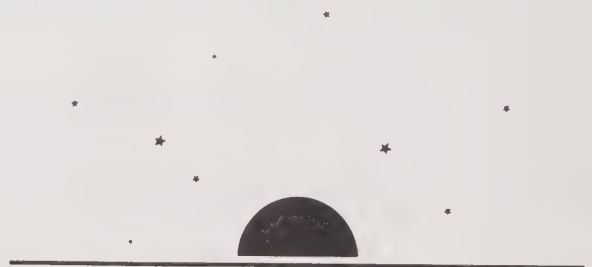
Produced primarily by Asian Americans and usually using a non-professional crew and cast, these films are remarkable in that they were devoid of any Asian stereotypes as depicted in most films about Asian Americans, both educational and commercial. Here, children and adults alike, are presented simply as human beings. No judgement is passed on their ethnic background or the fact that they speak in different or mixed languages. Frequently, their bi-cultural background is shown as an asset to their lives -- something that should be promoted and not buried. All this is extremely refreshing

in light of recent racist films such as "The Deer Hunter" and the "China Girl" segment in "How the West Was Won" TV series. The former violates the dignity of the Vietnamese and Chinese in the Indo-China War, and the latter depicts the Chinese in the early pioneer days in a blatantly patronizing way.

Bilingual Education

Another major focus of the conference was bilingual education. In the landmark *Lau vs. Nichols* case in 1974, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the San Francisco Unified School District illegally discriminated against nearly two thousand non-English speaking Chinese students by failing to provide bilingual instruction. The court held that "there is no equality in treatment merely by providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers and curriculum: for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education." This decision established new rights for the approximately five million limited- and non-English-speaking children throughout the United States.

Bilingual education refers to the use of two languages for instruction: one native language in addition to English. It also covers such aspects as appreciation for the native cultural heritage, thus making bilingual education both bilingual and bicultural. Within bilingual education, however, arises the controversy concerning methods of implementing the program. There are



Asian and Pacific American Education Directions for the 1980s

A National Conference co-sponsored by the National Association for Asian and Pacific American Education, APACS/US Office of Education, and the National Institute of Education.

San Francisco Hilton Hotel April 25, 26, and 27, 1979

two major approaches: *transitional* and *maintenance*. The *transitional approach* is akin to a remedial program, in that the main goal of the program is to attain proficiency in English. And until such proficiency is achieved, the child is accommodated in his or her native language, so as to avoid inequalities of curriculum based upon language. Implicit in this approach is the assumption that English is the superior language and that the non-English-speaking child's native language is a handicap. On the other hand, the *maintenance approach* is based on the premise that language is integrally related to the child's individual, family, and ethnic self-concept. The *maintenance approach* seeks to develop proficiency in English, but in addition, stresses the need to continue or maintain a program of bilingual instruction after English is learned.

While the U.S. schools have generally adhered to the Lau decision in implementing bilingual education from coast to coast (this includes Asians, Hispanics, as well as native Americans), Canada is still struggling with the 'remedial' English as a Second Language (ESL) programs for new immigrants and native-born Canadians who are limited-English-speaking. On May 3, 1979 Toronto's *Globe and Mail*, in an article entitled "English Classes Being Cut Back: Teachers Worry Immigrant Children Are Losing Ground", reported on the continuous cutbacks in ESL programs in Toronto schools. The article illustrated the problem with the case of a twelve-year old Portuguese Canadian boy. Frank (a pseudonym) is in Grade 5, his teacher doesn't think he is ready for Grade 6 because he still reads at a Grade 4 level. "If he were younger, she'd (the teacher) recommend that he repeat the year... but he has to move on, he's already failed once... Frank will go on to Grade 6, but because he won't be able to understand everything he's taught or asked to read, he'll fall even further behind. When his teachers feel he's too old for Grade 6, he'll progress to Grade 7..."

Ironically, the superficiality of the Canadian government's great 'ethnic mosaic' concept becomes glaringly apparent when we consider the more progressive bilingual education policies of the United States -- the supposed 'melting pot' of North America. The Asian and Pacific American Education Conference clearly underlined the fact that the key to cultural survival and intercultural understanding lies in the formal education system. What we need most urgently in Canada, therefore, is not a uniform school system characterized by indifference, but one containing innovative and flexible programmes that are sensitive to the individual needs of minority students, taking into account their linguistic and cultural diversity.

Our American counterparts have demonstrated that the only way to effect positive changes in education policies is to have united representation and a strong voice at all levels of government. As the United States approaches its 1980 census, Asian American educators are recognizing that in order to receive equitable funding, as well as to participate in the decision-making process, the 'invisible minority' must be 'visible' in the census. This concern surfaced and echoed among many of the participants at the conference. And as March Fong Eu stated in her opening address, "You don't count unless you are counted", so it is about time that Asianadians, too, "stand up and be counted".

Further information about the Asian and Pacific American Education Conference may be obtained from the Asian-Canadian Resource Workshop, P. O. Box 1256, Station "Q", Toronto, Ontario M4T 2P4, Canada.

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Reviews

WHITE CANADA FOREVER: A Study of anti-orientalism in Canada, especially in British Columbia--from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, by Peter Ward (McGill and Queen's University Press, Montreal, 1978.)

There have been many studies on Canadian racism, but most of them cover either a single major incident, or only one Asian Canadian community. *White Canada Forever* is one of the few studies on Canadian racism which has attempted to encompass acts of racism against all Asianadians, thus making it easier for the reader to see that all Asianadians have been fighting their separate battles in Canada against the same enemy.

Dr. Glen Filson of Toronto, a student of racism for some time, writes in his paper (yet unpublished) that most Canadian research on racism is structural-functional and is undertaken with the assumption that discrimination is the result of prejudice. *White Canada Forever*, unfortunately, happens to be a study of Canadian racism based on similar assumptions. Because of this attitude that racism is "fundamentally a problem in the social psychology of race relations", the book is limited mainly to the overt acts of racism and the prevalent attitudes of prejudice towards Asianadians in British Columbia. Important links such as those between the West Coast racism and the politics of colonialism, are undermined by the overly heavy emphasis on popular attitudes. The dominant theme of the book is the "frustrated vision" of white British Columbians and the hostile stereotypes giving rise to public pressure upon authorities at all levels, and resulting in official discriminatory policies in immigration and employment. The political and socioeconomic conditions in Canada and abroad which made this racial exploitation possible and consolidated it for many years to come, are given only secondary consideration in this study.

Although some of the major historical incidents, such as *Kamagata Maru* and the internment of Japanese Canadians are compacted in unreasonably short space, the book is full of valuable information for the general reader, as well as for the student of Canadian racism. What actually happened to the Asianadians in British Columbia from the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century appears to be well-researched and well-arranged in the book, making the work interesting and serious reading. But the analysis as to why all that happened (and is still happening) is that of a typical white liberal.

-MOHINDER SINGH

Seasons of Sacred Lust by Kazuko Shiraishi. Translated by Kenneth Rexroth, et. al. (New York: New Directions, 1978), 86 pp.

Kazuko Shiraishi is not really an Asian Canadian. Although she was born in Vancouver in 1931, she returned to Japan with her parents at the age of seventeen shortly before the outbreak of World War II. Perhaps, it is through this early exposure to different cultures that she has acquired a cosmopolitan attitude, a trans-Pacific mentality. Reading her poems, one does not feel constrained by any other culture or time or place. Her poetry has an international appeal. *Seasons of Sacred Lust*, the first major selection of Shiraishi's poetry to be translated into English, is a welcome and invigorating contribution to the body of contemporary Japanese literature available to the Western reader.

To readers accustomed only to the delicate refinement of older Japanese writers such as Kawabata or Tanizaki, Shiraishi may be a bit of a surprise, for she is a very modern very hip lady. Donald Keene, a noted Japan scholar, has called her the Allen Ginsberg of Japan and the description is apt, for her poetry contains the passion and dynamism of the Beat poets. She writes of love and anger, desire and alienation, ugliness and beauty. In short, her concerns are of the modern urbane, whether he or she lives in Tokyo or New York. -- and of the constant quest for love in an increasingly confusing and disintegrating society. In this kind of world, sex becomes part of our desperate attempt to find meaning and attain some degree of human integration.

Shiraishi's poetry is a unique and contemporary extension of traditional Japanese erotic writing. The large body of women's literature in 10th century Japan was filled with strong undercurrents of passion, and the humorists of the 17th century wrote boldly of male and female desire. But in the 20th century with the introduction of modernism and the confusion of old and new values, the disaffected male writers wrote increasingly of masculine spiritual impotence. The women in their works were either idealized, and hence unattainable, mother figures and virgins or their antithesis--prostitutes and whores. Because of their own alienation, these male writers found it necessary to divide women into two separate and irreconcilable categories.

But Shiraishi does not segregate the sexes. Men and women alike search for love and through sexual union try to grasp spiritual unity. The shattered swirling urban world is the backdrop for human emotions of an intense degree, and it is from the metropolis that Shiraishi draws her powerful and surrealistic imagery. She writes, for example, of riding the subway in New York:

*I've loved the subway for hours, as long as intercourse
The subway of my interior city's not made of iron
But of giving flesh.*

Shiraishi is a writer with guts and perception. It is the honesty with which she portrays contemporary alienation and our solutions to it that gives her poetry its biting edge and profundity. A final word should be given to the translators who have done an excellent job of capturing the vitality and vigor of Shiraishi's language.

-LYNNE KUTSUKAKE



Immigrant by Stephen Gill. (Cornwall: Vesta Publications, 1978), 121 pp.

It is a commonplace fact that writers of Asian background are few in Canada. The most obvious reason for this is that they find it difficult to get published in this country. It is deplorable when we consider that peoples of Asian origin have, and continue to make worthy contributions to the economic, social, and spiritual life of Canada. Moreover, many of these peoples come from areas with significant cultural histories.

However, one of the crucial problems faced by writers of Asian ancestry is that the publishing industry seems to be dominated by people of Anglo-American background who usually do not have a sufficient understanding of the source of inspiration of Asian Canadian writers. Editors tend to use a purely Western set of aesthetic criteria in evaluating works submitted to them. Not unexpectedly, then, Asian Canadian writers tend to fall short, or to appear confusing.

There is a strong sense of irony in all this. In a country which promotes the concept of the cultural mosaic, the literary culture of Asian Canadians is virtually being ignored. The concept, no doubt, becomes a meaningless one unless publishing houses across the land become more responsive, more venturesome--and experimental.

Like writers everywhere else, those of Asian Canadian stock strongly feel the pulse to express themselves, to be a voice of their group, to dramatize their unique reality with all the colouring of the creative imagination--to provide opportunities for enlightenment and catharsis among their readers in a society that is becoming increasingly cosmopolitan with all the friction that this engenders. Yet, this opportunity is not provided in any appreciable way. The end result is that the spiritual growth of Asian Canadians, as it affects literature, is being snarled and stifled.

This deprivation also makes nonsense of the concept of nationhood--for nationhood is truly the manifestation of the mind and soul of the peoples who inhabit the land in a literal and metaphorical way, the latter, especially to assist in defining "the spirit of the place." If opportunity for the latter is not provided, a spirit of homelessness begins to persist, galvanized by the often-asked question, "Where do you come from?"--prompted by the visible characteristics of those of a minority group such as Asian Canadians.

Inevitably, a number of psychological pressures are being exerted on the sensitive, thinking creative individual, resulting in a series of ambivalences about one's sense of identity. In order to be published according to Western aesthetic standards, the Asian Canadian writer must make certain compromises which leads to a hybridized kind of art. As Bharati Mukherjee, co-author of *Days and Nights in Calcutta*, states, "My aesthetic sense must accommodate a decidedly Hindu imagination with an Americanized sense of the craft of fiction."

How then can Asian Canadian writers become published and stick to their integrity if they are not given the chance by the more conventional publishing houses? The answer lies perhaps with the creation of their own publishing houses; but very often the technical expertise is lacking--as well as the confidence to operate in a field dominated by others.

Be that as it may. One man who seems to be making some sort of success is the Indian-born Canadian writer and publisher, Stephen Gill who operates Vesta Press from his home in Cornwall, Ontario. He is also a writer with many publications to his name. It seems to be inevitable therefore that Gill be seen as a pioneer, and his work, too, might be viewed from this perspective. His latest book is *Immigrant*--a novel--a genre to which he is not entirely unfamiliar, since he has written one previously. *Immigrant* deals with the fate of a recent Indian immigrant to Canada, who from the day of his arrival into this country has his hopes and aspirations dashed. The protagonist, Reghu, is immediately aware of the lack of interest among Canadians whom he encounters; thus a slow disillusionment sets in which continues as the novel progresses. Disillusionment is observed in his experience with the university, with finding a job, with his attempts at socialization in the Canadian society. Everyone seems to show a lack of concern. Some openly display prejudice and inconsistency in their dealings with him. And in response, Reghu becomes cynical--to such an extent that it is difficult to identify with him. He even appears dull as his bitterness increases--adding further to the atmosphere of unfriendliness and lack of sympathy for him.

The novel is weakened significantly by Reghu's inability to arouse our sympathy. Perhaps Gill could have made his main character attractive by being less cumbersome in his writing, especially by omitting some of the extraneous details of routine scenes. Moreover, from a purely structural point of view, the time-scheme changes unexpectedly, quite often leaving the reader confused.

Gill's range, dramatically speaking, is somewhat limited, as he tends to make his characters do more telling than showing. As a result, the book lacks a certain aesthetic quality, rendering it more of a mouth piece for the author's ideas than anything else.

Besides these flaws, *Immigrant* reads like a book that had to be written--one which most immigrants and native Canadians should read at some time or the other. Perhaps, only through works of this nature can the literary culture of Asian Canadians hope to become fostered in a way one such as myself expects.

-CYRIL DABYDEEN

Heritage Reruns

It is difficult to relate to 300,000 boat refugees --however, one person's experiences represent in micro-cosm the tragedy of the boat people.

HERITAGE RERUNS gives this account as told to Barbara Vip.

Twenty-two year old Lieu Thuan Nguyen has been in Canada for three months now. He is one of the many Vietnamese boat refugees of Chinese ethnic origin who is seeking a new life in Canada after enduring uncertainty and hardship in his native Vietnam and a Malaysian refugee camp.

Here is his story:

Last year on November 20 I left my country-- Vietnam. When my father's business and our home were confiscated by the government, we had the choice of being sent to one of the new rural resettlement zones in the northern part of the country or leaving the country completely. The resettlement zones are bleak areas of destroyed, bombed-out land. It is impossible to grow anything on that devastated earth and the water running through has been polluted with chemicals from the war. My family decided to leave.

I lived in Cholon, the Chinese quarter of Saigon, with my family: my parents, an older sister, and two younger brothers. My grandfather left Fukien, China, forty years ago to settle in Vietnam. I was a student and attended a Chinese school -- up until three years ago. Then, life started to change drastically for the Chinese there: we lost our jobs or businesses; we were placed under curfews; Chinese schools were closed down; and, suddenly, we were not allowed to mingle freely with the Vietnamese. Our lives became filled with fear.

Vietnam is a poor country. This year, its economy has been stretched even further with the incursion into Cambodia and the border war with China. It is believed that the expulsion of the thousands of Chinese is keeping the country going through the gold collected from each person leaving southern Vietnam. Ten taels of gold, or over \$3,000 is paid to the police and government for each adult, and half of that amount for each child under twelve years of age.

My family waited for two days at My Tho Harbour, outside of Saigon, for a vessel. Finally, at midnight, a government official called out our names and we were herded onto a small wooden fishing boat, approximately sixty feet long. It was a very old boat but mechanically sound. And they crowded 320 people into it-- men, women, children--and babies.

I shall never forget that boat journey. We could not stand up or walk around or go outside. All we could do was sit in one spot or lie down. But we could not sleep properly either. The rough sea kept the boat tossing and turning and our stomachs heaving. People were constantly moaning and children were crying. There was no milk for the babies. We nibbled on cakes and a few oranges-- but there was never enough water to quench our thirst. It was rationed severely and we were only allowed sips at a time.

One woman and one baby died from sicknesses during the journey. An elderly 70-year old man jumped overboard and committed suicide on the third day at sea.

Our boat met other boats at sea. They needed help but our boat was so crowded that we could do nothing for them. I often wonder what happened to those boats.

Before I left Vietnam, I had put together a very small package of personal belongings to take with me. But, at the harbour, the police confiscated all our personal property. I left Vietnam with the clothes on my back and a gold ring on my finger.

In the rare quiet and still moments, I heard music from the sea. I think they were the spirits of the drowned Chinese and they were singing in their new life.

It is a good luck custom of Vietnamese fishermen to kill a chicken before setting out to sea. Our family had done this before we left Vietnam. And, after four long days at sea, the chicken brought us good fortune: our boat reached land and we docked in a cove of beautiful palm trees. We didn't know exactly where we were, so many of the younger men left the boat to explore.

In the morning, we met a Malaysian man. He said, "Don't be afraid." He had called the police and they gave us meal and water. We spent part of the day there. At four p.m., we were transported to one of the three refugee camps in Malaysia. Our camp held over 2,000 Vietnamese and was located approximately 100 miles from the city of Kuantan at the foot of some mountains. We were all exhausted and immediately fell asleep.

The following morning, the police, who supervised the camp, sold us equipment to go to the hills to cut down trees. We had to get wood to build ourselves shelters, and to burn for cooking. After we had the wood, it took us two days to build a shelter/house: four meters square and three meters in height. I shared this space with my family.

Because the camp was located near an important harbour, we were watched constantly. The police set the rules and meted out punishment whenever a camp

rule was broken. Generally, punishment for a minor infraction consisted of being made to sit out in the hot sun all day stripped down to shorts. Sometimes this included a beating. You were punished for fighting, stealing, or trying to leave the camp. If you cut the wrong kind of tree, perhaps a valuable wood, you were punished with a stay in prison. If you were punished more than once, you were sent away to a distant prison.

In the camp, we had to dig wells to obtain water. But with only five wells and 2,000 people, there was never enough water to drink, let alone wash. When it rained, we spread out all the pots and dishes to collect the precious rain water. Well water was never used for washing; thus, these downpours gave us a chance to bathe and shower.

Everyone slept on the ground inside the little shelters we had built. We had no bedding but the weather was very hot. Medical aid was not available. There were many very sick people at our camp and they should have been treated in a hospital but were not. I remember some babies who hadn't had enough to eat and they died. Some women were forced to give birth in the camp because they were not allowed to leave to be taken to a hospital.

The International Red Cross distributed food to us daily. We were allowed 1.8 kilos of rice per family per week, one-and-a-half cans of fish per person per week, plus vegetables. Sometimes we were given two eggs per person per week. And each month, a family received one chicken. Because of the large Moslem population in Malaysia, we were not allowed to eat pork and this was a punishable offence.

This ration of food often wasn't sufficient. Those who had a bit of extra money or some personal possession to sell or trade, used it to buy extra food and clothing. I sold my gold ring and bought some clothes and cooking pots. We purchased this extra food from the few people who were allowed to leave the camp. Food was expensive to buy: a half-pint of milk cost two dollars Malaysian currency (\$1. Cdn.) and less than a pound of sugar was the same price.

Often journalists from the U.S. or France would come to the camp but the police would not allow any of us to talk to them or let them take photographs. Some local Malaysian-Chinese came to the gates of the camp and tried to give us clothing and food but the police frowned upon this and tried to discourage them.

I remember when I was at the camp, I heard that a boat from Vietnam with 300 people had arrived at Malaysia. The government there would not let the boat stay and opened fire on it. Then they towed the shattered boat out to sea.

For eight months, I existed from day to day, not knowing what would become of me and my family, but always hoping that tomorrow would bring a change.

Yes, there were some happy moments. One day that is burned into my memory forever is my last day at the camp. My family and the friends we had made gave me a goodbye party. We sat around a huge campfire and talked, laughed a lot, sang together and danced through the night. Whenever we heard good news, we had an excuse for another celebration and party-- those good times carried us through many bleak and monotonous days. My party was an unforgettable last night because the next day I was going to Canada.

When my family was interviewed by Canadian immigration officials, we were asked if we had any skills (my father is an auto mechanic and my brother is an electrician), if we spoke any English, and then we underwent very thorough medical examinations. I waited a month to come to Canada, after I heard that I had been accepted. I left first--alone--and the rest of my family joined me here two months later. The day I left camp, my family and friends were very sad and we all cried together. My mother told me, "Do not be afraid."

I know I am very lucky to be here. Canada is so large and beautiful. I am happy here. I can walk the streets and go wherever I wish. Those who are still in Vietnam are not living--they are just waiting for death. I have many friends in Vietnam who do not have the money to pay the government to leave -- and those who can leave must face the perils of the sea. I remember, I have a friend who bought a boat and wanted his family to leave the country. One night he secretly left but the military police saw them and fired on them. They all died before they even got away.

My country has been fighting too long. I hope its people soon find freedom and peace.

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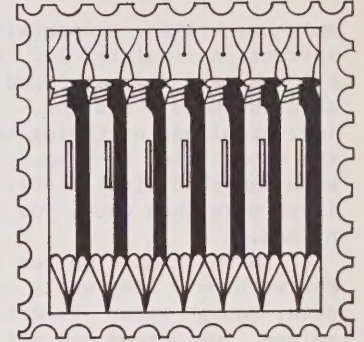
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Letters



Dear Editor:

In your latest issue, you have demonstrated once again that you prefer to pound your readers over the head with a sledge hammer. I think it often happens that readers are more moved by their own conclusions drawn from the material-- this means that the material should allow the conclusions, but, without merely standing up and asserting it loudly and often. Present facts, images, and tones that make the reader sympathetic, open, and informed-- leave room for discovery. I like your Panama Cafe story-- lots of color, and information-- very interesting stuff.

Despite these criticisms, I am impressed with the fact that your magazine exists at all....

Ed Sherman
Jenner,
California

Dear Editor:

In your most recent *Community News* (Vol. 1, No. 4), you reported that Cinevision Workshop's *Happy New Year* TV programme was presented in English but neglected to mention that the same programme was also produced in Chinese.

Actually, Cinevision Workshop produces television programmes primarily in Chinese aimed at the Chinese speaking audience in Toronto. The English version of *Happy New Year* was produced as a supplement to the original Chinese version so that other non-Chinese-speaking audience can enjoy the programme as well. This fact was not implied in your reporting.

Belinda Li
Cinevision Workshop
Toronto, Ontario

Editor note: The Asianadian stands corrected.

Dear Editor:

As a second generation Japanese Canadian, and I stress Canadian, I find that your magazine smacks of yellow journalism. It brings back bad memories that I experienced in Kaslo, B.C. What is in the past is finished. We have Raymond Moriyama, David Suzuki, and also the Chinese Adrienne Clarkson and Dr. Shih of the National Gallery. This proves that Asians can rise to the top. I disagree with your self-defeating tone.

B. Tanaka
Agincourt,
Ontario

Dear Editor:

I was impressed by your 'new look', especially your logo. It is reminiscent of Alex Fleming's innovative designs for C.N. and Gray Coach. The departmental illustrations brought a sense of cohesiveness to the magazine. The powerful pen-and-ink drawings by Hing Mak enhances the intensity of W.M. Lee's stirring account of Chinese labourers in Canada. I am glad to read about Chasha's evocative statement on the use of "Chinamen" by Western journalists. I look forward to your next selection of the *Dubious Award*. Ms. Murthi's mature analysis and meticulous research is a revealing story of the plight of Asian women. Just one thing, how about some more fiction in your future issues.

Stephen Vee
Kitchner,
Ontario

Dear Editor:

As an active member of Asian movements in the U.S. in the late 1960's, I find your magazine refreshing and stimulating. You are in the vanguard. Let us hope that your words will act as a catalyst to other concerned Asians in Canada.

Volanda Sibal
San Francisco
California

Dear Editor:

Congratulations! You've survived a year! Having personally been involved in progressive publications for the past ten years and having witnessed the birth and burial of many "magazines of change", I want to commend you all on your efforts and good work. Your product is a testimony to the saying that Asians "work hard".

Robert Fung
Toronto,
Ontario

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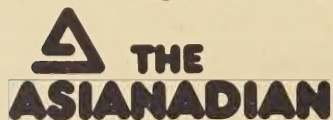
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